

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO EVIL

IN SOME

SIXTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA

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by

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	vi.
INTRODUCTION	viii.
CHAPTER ONE The Early Morality	1
CHAPTER TWO The Reformation Plays	16
CHAPTER THREE Tyrants and Revenge	52
CHAPTER FOUR Plays of Ambition	95
CHAPTER FIVE Usurpation and Rebellion	153
CONCLUSION	216
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
- of Texts Discussed and referred to in Thesis	218
- of Critical Material	221

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text or in the footnotes.

Signed

... the purpose of playing, whose end,
both at the first and now, was and is,
to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature;
to show virtue her own feature, scorn
her own image, and the very age and
body of the time his form and pressure.

Hamlet, III.ii.21-24.

A B S T R A C T

My thesis contends that in sixteenth century English drama there were considerable changes in the dramatists' attitudes to evil. Beginning with the late medieval play *Everyman*, the thesis examines the early Tudor Moralities, the religious polemical dramas, plays of tyranny, revenge and ambition, and ends with the history plays at the end of the century.

Evil is realized in *Everyman* and in the early Moralities, such as *Nature*, *Hickscorner* and *Magnificence* through personified vices which occupy the stage in costumes which suit their particular nature, so that both aurally and visually they can impress the dramatist's didactic message upon the audience. The same method of staging evil continues in the religious polemical plays of the Reformation, and is even found, to a lesser degree, in the tyrant and revenge plays like *Apilus and Virginia* and *Horestes*. In the religious plays of the Reformation however, with the exception of *Respublica*, evil is seen as residing in Roman Catholic theology, rather than in the conduct of a mankind figure who has fallen prey to the temptations and deceptions of the Vices. The presentation of a former good as an evil has a divisive effect upon the mankind figure, and this in turn leads to a more complex situation in man's confrontation with evil. Crises of conscience are enacted in plays such as *The Conflict of Conscience*, and, with much greater dramatic and tragic appeal, in *Doctor Faustus*. In Marlowe's play it is the dramatist's poetic and dramatic superiority that distinguishes his work from the earlier Morality plays where man's destiny is to be decided.

In spite of the popular appeal of the Vice figure there is a very early attempt by an anonymous writer to realize evil in a human character. This occurs in *Godly Queen Hester* (1525-29), where the predominant concern is with virtuous rule. Both this play and *Magnificence* (1513-16) are thought to have been addressed to Henry VIII, so that the political overtones of both plays are not surprising. In spite of the religious zeal which dominates the Reformation plays, these earlier plays prefigure the transition from homiletic drama to plays which focus on secular concerns with particular emphasis on political affairs. In fact if religion is the primary concern of the medieval play, politics are certainly the popular fare of the Tudors, rivalled only by the generous portions of *grand guignol* entertainment which were so avidly consumed by Elizabethan audiences. But even though the predominant concerns are changed, and the settings of the dramas have become more colourful and varied, yet it is still man's passions that possess the capacity to bring about his ruin. As man's frequent predilection for evil is acknowledged, the villains of the stage grow in stature to be realized in figures like Hoffman, Lorenzo and Richard III. Even so, this villainy is still often conveyed through the Morality device of the Vice figure, although this figure is gradually being replaced by two new popular types of stage villains, the Senecan and the Machiavellian.

Hence the dramatists' attitudes towards the evils they present, and which are very much a part of man's conduct and his nature, are influenced by the religious, philosophical and political background of the times, and, importantly, by the dramatist's own abilities, and the demands of an audience whose tastes changed with the times.

INTRODUCTION

My thesis contends that in sixteenth century English drama, authorial attitudes to evil underwent considerable changes. This was due to the fact that the dramatist's conception of man's capacity for evil became much more complex as the century progressed, and the sphere of man's activity in the drama became far more widespread and comprehensive, transposing him from a race with death in *Everyman* to the world of political intrigue in the history plays at the end of the century.

In *Everyman* and the early Protestant Moralities, the special concern is for man's salvation, and the evil depicted is always specified as sin. The emphasis of these plays is religious and the scope of the plays, although it often follows the whole pilgrimage of man's life is narrowed to focus on the means for achieving redemption. The theological beliefs that informed *Everyman* are challenged by the religious polemical plays of the Reformation, and, in fact, most virulently attacked by John Bale, so that the focus of evil shifts from examining man's conduct to denouncing Catholic theology, and everyone and everything that is associated with Catholicism is seen as evil.

The essentially optimistic image of a redeemable man which is the understanding of the Catholic and early Protestant Moralities is rudely shaken by the Calvinist doctrines which began to influence Protestant playwrights, and in which the dramatist focussed on sin and man's inclination to sin with an intensity that darkened the image of man and his destiny. Plays like *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *The Conflict of Conscience* demonstrate the Calvinist theory that some

men are predestined by God for damnation, and hence their efforts to achieve forgiveness and redemption are really futile. This change of attitude towards man and his destiny possesses a potential for tragic development which Marlowe realizes in *Doctor Faustus*.¹ Although Marlowe's play is so dissimilar to *Everyman* in its portrayal of a hero whose despairing conviction bars the way to repentance, and although approximately one hundred years separate the two plays, yet the seeds for this tragic impasse are clearly discernible in *Everyman*, and much of the religious doctrine in *Doctor Faustus* resembles that of the medieval play. An important advance in Marlowe's play is his projection of a sense of remorse and conflict of conscience in the hero. The growth in the dramatist's understanding of man's psychological makeup plays an important role in the drama's evolution and in the way in which man's capacity for evil is understood and dramatized. A play that is often given too little attention, *Arden of Feversham*, is an achievement of no mean dimension in this area of psychological penetration.

A theme that is common to the evil of all the plays is man's frequent inability to control his passions. In the Moralities the vices and the virtues of man are personified and constitute almost the entire cast of the play. The later plays that focus on tyranny, revenge, and ambition, are really extended and detailed examinations of these passions enacted far more realistically than they are in the Moralities. This realistic effect is often exaggerated to excessive proportions to satisfy the audience's predilection for *grande guignol* theatre as well as to further its edification. Some plays, notably revenge tragedies like Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Chettle's

1. I am not suggesting, however, that *Doctor Faustus* is a Calvinist play.

The Tragedy of Hoffman, and spectacles like Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, would seem to be designed to provide for this sensationalist appetite of the audience rather than to propagate any important didactic message. And the figure of Shakespeare's Richard III is an outstanding example of theatrical achievement which proves the dramatist's great ability to exploit the theatrical aspects of his art. Hence, religious concerns and developments, audience's tastes, and the playwrights' theatrical inspiration all played their part in the broadening of the dramatic concept of evil.

Cultural and political ideas also influenced the growth of the drama. Senecan influence is discernible in many of the plays with sensational appeal, and the spirit of Renaissance humanism is apparent, particularly in Marlowe's plays, where man is credited with the dignity of being responsible for his choice and the consequences of it. But undoubtedly the greatest single influence is associated with the political philosophies of the century, and, in particular, as far as English drama is concerned, with the reign of the Tudors. In fact while nearly all medieval and early sixteenth century plays may be regarded as firmly focussed on religious values, the most predominant interest to follow and to supplant the religious is the political. Plays like Skelton's *Magnificence* (1515-1518) and the anonymous *Godly Queen Hester* (1525-1529) begin the vogue by addressing advice allegedly to Henry VIII, and the chronicle and history plays of the middle and late century like Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561-1562) and the great history plays at the end of the century demonstrate the importance of the interrelated themes of history and politics. Even Bale's *King John* (1530-1538) and *Respublica* (1553) share a patriotic concern for the nation although they occupy opposite sides of the arena in the holy war staged by the dramas of the Reformation.

In *Gorbuduc* and the later histories large-scale evil like rebellion is examined, and ultimately the Shakespearean tetralogies introduce a world of *realpolitik* that presents an entirely more complex idea of evil than that of the plays early in the century. Man is prey to the same passions, although these passions are now scrutinized with greater perception; but his performance is highlighted with a disenchanted vision completely lacking in the earlier plays.

Although the seeds of the later evil may be present in the earlier drama, it is as if only now does the dramatist dare to expose it, or, indeed, know how to dramatise it. And to exemplify the marriage of an older and newer figure of evil, Marlowe and Shakespeare, in particular, weld together the Vice figure of the Moralities and the new political Machiavellian villain to project evil with a new and exciting brilliance in protagonists like Barabas and Richard 111.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY MORALITY

... yet, thou hast an amiable soul,
If sin by custom grow not into nature.

Doctor Faustus, XV111,43-44.

*Everyman*¹ dated between 1480 and 1500 is a convenient play with which to begin this investigation, because as a late medieval Morality play it provides a suitable yardstick by which to measure the scope and development of the drama in the sixteenth century. The play is serious and homiletic in its purpose, and its concern is exclusively religious in that it sets out to get Everyman, and by extension the audience, to recognize the transience of worldly things and the importance of salvation.

The Messenger speaking at the beginning of the play warns man that although sin may at first appear "full swete" to him, it will eventually cause his downfall, because every man is called to a "general rekenynge" before God. God himself then speaks and laments the fact that man is so immersed in sin that he forgets God completely. Sin itself is identified as a predilection for the amassing of worldly goods and an indulgence in the seven deadly sins. God recalls the suffering of the redemptive act which itself was enacted so that man could be saved and enjoy the reward of eternal life, but so pre-occupied has he become with sin and the pursuit of worldly wealth that he does not even ask for the mercy which God offers him. In order to bring man to a reckoning, God summons Death.

1. *Everyman*, ed. A.C. Cawley (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1974). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

Death then appears before Everyman, who complains: "thou comest whan I had thee leest in mynde" (l. 119). Everyman is not depicted with the severity that later mankind figures are. Not only is he unprepared for death, but he also demonstrates that he is completely deluded regarding the nature of virtue. As he seeks desperately for help, he suddenly recalls:

All my lyfe I have loved ryches;
If that my Good now helpe my myght,
He wolde make my herte full lyght.

(ll. 388-90)

He describes his plight to Goods, and shows the extent of his naivety by stating that his worldly goods might well be able to plead his case with God, since it is said "That money maketh all ryght that is wronge" (l. 413). Goods shows his worldly nature by informing Everyman:

Nay, Everyman, I synge another songe.
I folowe no man in such vyages;
For, and I went with the,
Thou sholdest fare moche the worse for me.
For bycause on me thou dyd set thy mynde,
Thy rekenyng I have made blotted and blynde....

(ll. 414-19)

He goes on, "my condycyon is mannes soule to kyll" (l. 442). Spivack comments that the figure of Goods, both in his words and conduct, resembles the Vice of the later Moralities.² Everyman's surprise firmly establishes him as a naive sinner, who is deluded by his dependency on worldly goods:

O false Good, cursed thou be,
Thou traytour to God, that hast deceyued me
And caught me in thy snare!

(ll. 451-53)

It is, therefore, not a difficult matter to consent to his salvation,

2. Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), p. 194.

and Everyman himself does not question the importance of salvation as his goal. He is a very different figure to the recalcitrant Worldly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, which is coloured by Calvinist theology and not the Catholic theology of the *Everyman* author. Accordingly, Death is a more patient figure. Although he warns: "I gyue the no respyte. Com hens, and not tary" (l. 130), he gives Everyman sufficient time to distinguish between the transient and undependable things of this life, and those which will help him to achieve salvation and, therefore, eternal life. The denouement is a merciful one.

Everyman realizes that Good Deeds are of lasting value, and Knowledge leads him through the sacraments to a merciful death. The play closes with the assurance that salvation is within the grasp of every man who "hath his accounte hole and sounde". *Everyman* is unusual in that it focusses on man's preparation for death, and the span of time which is covered is, therefore, very short. In *Nature*³ (1490-1501) by Henry Medwall it is the whole pilgrimage of man's life that is followed. The play begins appropriately enough with Nature defining her part in the cosmic scheme, and with Man defining his own nature, giving particular stress to his free will. He states that he has

. . . free election
[To] do what I will, be it evil or well;
And am put in the hand of mine own counsel.
And, in this point, I am half angelic;
Unto Thy heavenly spirits almost egal;
Albeit in some part I be to them unlike....

(p. 47)

The other part of Man's nature, his mortality, entails sensuality, and again it is emphasized that this is quite natural to him. What Man must ensure is that his reason should always remain in control of

3. *"Lost" Tudor Plays*, ed. John S. Farmer (LONDON, 1966), pp. 41-133. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

his appetites, for man ruled by appetite is like "an unreasonable beast" (p. 52). Stressed is the "wondrous mind" that man has been given to enable him to distinguish between good and evil.

Once Man steps forth into the world he immediately experiences conflict between his sensuality and his reason. Now that he is in the world Mundus counsels Man to live "by sage policy and worldly prudence" (p. 60). This advice foreshadows the divorce of spiritual and secular concerns. At the beginning of Man's worldly life he appears much as the simple victim of a well-organized confidence-game, but once he has expelled innocence, and immersed himself in life's pleasures, he becomes a willing and active participant. In this he is unlike Everyman, whose enlightenment, as distinct from his conversion, occurs just before his death.

Man experiences only one brief conversion, until Age, the inveterate spoil-sport of these Moralities, arrives to check his downward path. It is clearly shown that only the decrepitude of the flesh brings Man to a halt, and he recognizes this:

I cannot continue though I would;
For Age hath wained me clean therefro.

(p. 120)

Reason dictates the way to salvation and warns against "all manner of despair". Despair, as Mankind recognizes in *The Castle of Perseverance* stands between the sinner and forgiveness, and Marlowe will later develop this theme to great dramatic and tragic proportions in *Doctor Faustus*. In *Nature*, however, and in the next play for discussion, *Mundus et Infans*, it receives only passing comment, and no dramatic emphasis through personification, as the Seven Deadly Sins do. The evil represented by these sins is vividly accentuated, both aurally and visually, as they plot and squabble noisily, and as Pride parades

her garish garb before the audience. Pride is labelled as "the root of all sin" and each sin receives sound condemnation for the peculiar occasion of evil that it presents.

It is in keeping with *Nature's* emphasis on free will that Reason should warn Man that his salvation ultimately depends on himself: "it must be thy deed" (p. 122). The steps Man takes to win forgiveness demonstrate that the way he can best achieve salvation is through his good deeds, as was the case with Everyman.

The positioning of the evil between the two expositions of good as presented by Nature at the beginning, and Reason and the Virtues at the end, has the effect of exposing the nature of the Vices most explicitly because of the contrast effected, and because this contrast plays up the reckless and temporary pleasures afforded by the Vices, compared to the reasoned and lasting qualities of the Virtues.

With the emphasis so consistently placed on Man's free will, and with the reference to his "wondrous mind" and part-angelic nature, it is apparent that Medwall had a high concept of man's nature and capabilities. This does not blind him to man's capacity for sin. Nevertheless, the accent remains on salvation and the redeemable image of man, and the play looks ahead to the Renaissance image of man as the measure of all things.

This is true also of *Mundus et Infans*⁴ (1508-1522), which again spans the life of man. Manhood rises to become Manhood Mighty and glories in his sense of power:

4. *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, eds. Edgar T. Schell and J.D. Shuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 167-98. All references to the text of *Mundus et Infans* are from this edition.

All lands are led by my laws,
 Baron was there never born that so well him bore,
 For I have might and main over countries far....

(ll. 239-42)

Although the play has the same didactic purpose as *Everyman* and *Nature*, the dramatist's attitude seems to be that the hero's fall into error is not so much culpable, as it is a "natural absorption" into the hazards of this world.⁵ This is given additional emphasis as the hero receives no introductory teaching before entering the world, as Man did in *Nature*. As in the case of Medwall's Man, it is only with the advent of Age that the hero's conversion to virtue is effected, but unlike Man he is shown as more aware of the gravity of his sins, and hence closer to despair:

... unto all sins he [Folly] set me
 Alas, that me is woe!
 For I have falsely me forsworn,
 Alas that I was born....

(ll. 844-47)

Conscience and Perseverance are Manhood's good counsellors opposing the worldly advice of Mundus and Folly, who recommend the seven deadly sins to the hero. Dramatically, evil has less impact in this play as there is no personification of the sins, and the audience must gauge the culpability of the hero from his long exposition on his progress through the seven ages of man's life.

*Hickscorner*⁶ (1513-16) is not consistent with morality tradition, because it lacks a hero or central character whose salvation is the aim of the play. Although one might expect Hickscorner himself to fill this role, he does not enter until nearly half-way through the

5. Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1936), p. 206.

6. *Dodsley's Old English Plays*, Vol. 1, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874), pp. 143-95. All references to the text of *Hickscorner* are from this edition.

play, and his stay is only short. Moreover, no attempt is made to effect his redemption. Pity maintains the central position for much of the play, but he, also, is absent from the play's denouement.

Bevington explains these inconsistencies as possibly due to the fact that there were only four players available for the play's enactment.⁷

Farnham criticizes the play for its lack of a real protagonist,⁸ and Ramsay refers to a theory that the early form of the *Conflict of Virtues and Vices* possibly had no central figure over whom the forces of good and evil fought.⁹ He names *Hickscorner* as the sole extant Morality which might help to substantiate this theory. I would suggest that whether or not it was the author's intention, the frequent focussing of attention on the precarious state of England's moral life has the effect of proffering England as the central character of the play, in much the same way that *Respublica* does later. Pity shows deep concern for the nation's depravity, and while Freewill revels in it, Imagination plots ways in which to increase it. Whatever the author's intention may have been, it is a fact that the moral picture is seen as bleak and widespread, and it is envisaged in much the same way that the effects of rebellion are later to be seen in the history plays, in that all moral virtues have become inverted. The words "worse was it never" are repeated at frequent intervals (pp. 174-75), in order to impress the gravity of the situation upon the audience. Freewill and Imagination are converted eventually, but resist stoutly for some time, relenting only at the insistence that death comes

7. David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 138-139.

8. Farnham, p. 214.

9. Robert Lee Ramsay, Introduction, *Magnificence* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1908; 1925 EETS), p. clv.

unpredictably, and if it catches the sinner unrepentant, he is "lost and damned for evermore" (p. 186). Hence there is not shown any voluntary choice for virtue as a good in itself. Freewill, while acknowledging his capacity to choose good or evil, reveals a lively preference for carousing generally, and no inclination at all towards good. However, Imagination appears as the particular evildoer, since his wrongdoings are widespread throughout society, and are inflicted seemingly for the enjoyment they give him. Imagination can be interpreted as a "perversion of man's power of reason",¹⁰ and if this is how the anonymous author of *Hickscorner* intended it to be seen, it indeed presents a dangerous abuse of what Medwall's *Nature* extolled as man's reliable guide. The play shows a progress in characterization as its characters are becoming recognizable as types rather than as mere abstractions.

The same can be said of John Skelton's *Magnifycence* (1515-1518),¹¹ where the Vices perform much like the court flatterers of the later chronicle plays. For the most part, *Magnifycence* is concerned with worldly matters and specifically those of a prince. It is thought that it was written to warn Henry VIII against the counsel of Cardinal Wolsey.¹² Measure appears playing much the same role as Reason has done previously, so that it provides the important moral of the play. *Magnifycence* has more sophistication than the preceding plays because in the execution of its didactic purpose use is made of various literary traditions.

Unlike the former Moralities it praises worldly wealth as a

10. Farnham, p. 214.

11. *Four Morality Plays*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 211-311. All references to the text of *Magnifycence* are from this edition.

12. See Farnham, p. 216; Ramsay, pp. cviii-cx.

good in itself provided:

... that Welthe with Measure shalbe combyned,
And Lyberte his large with Measure shall make.

(ll. 179-80)

Measure is recommended with the same kind of imagery that we have noted in *Nature*, where it is used in reference to Reason:

Lyberte without Measure is accountyd for a beste;
There is no surfet where Measure rulyth the feste;
There is no excesse where Measure hath his helthe;
Measure contynwyth Prosperyte and Welthe.

(ll. 138-41)

The ethical guide used by Skelton is not a Christian one, but an Aristotelian.¹³ Felycyte warns Magnyfycence of the dire consequences to himself if he dismisses the moderating influence of Measure from his life:

For without Measure, poverte and nede
Wyll crepe upon us, and us to Myschefe lede.
For Myschefe wyll mayster us yf Measure us forsake.

(ll. 152-54)

As is to be expected this is exactly what occurs, and the Vices are led by Fancy, who masquerades before Magnyfycence as Largesse with a fraudulent letter of recommendation from Sad Circumspeccyon (l. 311), and a persuasive line of argument that

Measure is mete for a marchauntes hall,
But Largesse becometh a state ryall.

(ll. 382-83)

Felycyte's earlier prediction is fulfilled, and the audience witnesses Magnyfycence's sudden fall presented in the style of a *de casibus* tragedy, shortly after he has held the centre of the stage at some length, expounding in much the same manner as a Marlovian over-reacher:

13. See Ramsay, p. xxxiii.

Syrus, that soleme Syar of Babylon,
That Israell releysyd of theyr captyvyte,
For al his pompe, for all his ryall trone,
He may not be comparyd unto me.

(ll. 1473-76)

There is much more in this vein. His excessive pride deludes him into thinking that he is even above Fortune's control:

Fortune to her lawys can not abandune me,
But I shall of Fortune rule the reyne.

(ll. 1459-60)

The figure of Adversyte is introduced to represent his retribution:

The Stroke of God, Adversyte, I hyght;
I plucke downe kynge, prynce, lorde, and knyght;
I rushe at them roughly and make them ly full lowe;
And in theyr moste truste I make them overthrowe.

(ll. 1882-85)

The emphasis of the play now becomes Christian. Poverty is the hero's punishment, and Poverté sternly rebukes Magnyfycence with words that recall his former excessive self-confidence:

Syr, remembre the tourne of Fortunes whele,
That wantonly can wynke, and wynche with her hele....

(ll. 2022-23)

Unlike *Everyman*, *Nature* and *Mundus et Infans*, the play does not concern itself with the gaining of pardon for worldly sin in order to merit eternal salvation (although this is implicit also) - it teaches Magnyfycence how to persevere in adversity, so that he might again obtain the worldly good of felicity. Poverté teaches:

With harte contryte make your supplicacyon
Unto your Maker that made bothe you and me:

Put your wyll to His wyll, for surely it is He
That may restore you agayne to felycyte,
And brynge you agayne out of adversyte.

(ll. 1991-99)

In the last section of *Magnyfycence*, despair is presented as the major evil accompanying adversity. Good Hope says:

There is no man may synne more mortally
Than of Wanhope thurgh the unhappy wayes,
By Myschefe to brevyate and shorten his dayes....

(ll. 2335-37)

Former Moralities have acknowledged despair as an evil, but in *Magnyfycence*, Dyspare steps forward onto the stage, thus dramatizing its dangerous nature, and reminding the hero that "It is to late nowe thy synnys to repent" (l. 2292). It is despair that creates in *Magnyfycence* the frame of mind that makes him receptive to Myschefe's urge to take his life. The motif of despair and even the offer of the knife to end life occurs later in *Doctor Faustus*. In *Magnyfycence*, Good Hope, Redresse, Sad Circumspeccyon and Perseveraunce come to the Prince's aid, and bring him to earthly rather than heavenly happiness. Paradoxically, for all its worldly concerns, the play ends with a *de contemptu mundi* passage, which doubtless Skelton used to place these concerns within a more comprehensive perspective.

Skelton depicts evil within a literary framework which gives a realism not found in the former Moralities. As stated, the Vices are readily recognizable as court flatterers and manipulators concerned with their own ambitions, and as the protagonist is a prince it is extremely plausible that he might be extravagant in his tastes and lifestyle. Lengthy though the play is, in retrospect it is possible to see why the playwright chose the intellectual concepts and literary styles he did, together with a conclusion of the *de contemptu mundi* genre, if he wished to impress King Henry VIII as it has been alleged.

The antics of the Vices, which occupy the stage unchecked from

the departure of Magnyfycence (c. 395) until his reappearance (c. 1374), would doubtless gain in merit when taken in visually, particularly as added entertainment would be achieved by their fantastic costuming.

A link with Skelton's play is provided by the anonymous play *Godly Queen Hester* (1525-1529)¹⁴ in that, here too, it is thought that the playwright is making allusions to Cardinal Wolsey.¹⁵ The play is concerned to focus attention on the necessary requisites of a good ruler. Opening with a debate that is reminiscent of Plato's *Republic* it, therefore, has something of the classical features of Skelton's play, but this effect is short-lived, as its biblical associations become apparent as soon as Hester appears. Nevertheless, its chief concerns are secular rather than religious.

For the first time in these Moralities evil is concentrated in a human character, Aman, and not in an abstraction. Aman is one of the king's advisers and a participant in the opening debate. Ironically, he is to become the victim of that justice which he himself has urged is the most necessary virtue of a ruler. The king warns Aman when he appoints him as his chancellor, that he must use justice and truth always, or "to your destruction we shall you soon remove" (p. 253). The same caution is repeated to Aman, when he complains to the king of the widespread, slanderous lies that are circulating against his "life, goodness, credence and honesty" (pp. 269-70). The audience is, therefore, kept assured that the king intends to rule justly.

The first information regarding Aman's abuse of authority is

14. *Six Anonymous Plays*, ed. John S. Farmer (London: Early English Drama Society, 1906), pp. 245-87. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

15. See Spivack, pp. 256-58.

conveyed by a "poorly arrayed" figure (p. 261) whom the audience is unable to recognize at first as Pride, since, traditionally, this figure is exotically costumed. This alone holds some dramatic impact and suggests the impoverished condition of the state while Aman is in charge of its coffers. Adulation and Ambition follow, and the audience learns that the three vices have lost their "commissions" to Aman, who has succeeded in out-Vicing all of them. Pride complains of this double world, aptly describing the kind of world where Aman can be

Outwardly kind, in his heart a fiend -
A knave of two parts.

(p. 261)

The complaints of the Vices suggest that all the vices are now concentrated in Aman, an idea which looks ahead to Shakespeare's Richard III. This play marks a change in the dramatist's attitude towards man and evil, because implicit in the lack of employment for the Vices is the suggestion that man himself is capable of evil so great that it puts vice itself to shame. Previously each Vice has been presented with a nature representing its own specific evil. In Aman, not one, but many vices exist, in such strength that the three Vice figures pale into insignificance, an idea that is heightened by their comic withdrawal "to the tavern door" (p. 268), and again, in their choric-style of comment on Aman's conduct.

Foremost among Aman's wicked deeds is his plot to be rid of the Jews. Playing the double role attributed to him by Pride, he persuades the king that the Jews are a threat to the security of both the ruler and the nation, concluding that in slaying them

Ye shall by that win, to say I dare be bold,
To your treasure ten thousand pound of gold.

(p. 274)

There is no doubt about whose treasure Aman is concerned to supplement. One of the Jews comments:

He [Aman] shall by this murder our
 goods win
 And himself enlarge, his pride to advance....

(p. 277)

Opposing the evil of Aman is the clear-headed, purposeful virtue of Hester. The dramatist's forthright presentation of this virtue gives it an uncompromising strength and potency that makes it a formidable weapon against evil. Virtue would seem to gain in strength when it is concentrated in a strong, human character, rather than in a single Virtue-figure. Its close association with the biblical story of Hester assists in this effect. Aman is immediately exposed and condemned by Hester's denunciation of him. The king, realizing that he has been deceived by Aman's "flattering tongue" (p. 281), deals out swift retribution. Aman is not shown to be repentant. Rather he is quick to exploit any womanly mercy that Hester might possess, showing his scheming nature by persuasively adding that, in helping him, she might "increase [her] merit and reward heavenly" (p. 281). However, Hester decides that his deeds are so reprehensible that honour forbids any merciful intervention, and King Assuerus censures Aman for daring to appeal in such a manner to his queen's conscience. As far as the audience can ascertain, an unrepentant Aman is hanged and damned eternally for his heinous crimes on earth.

Godly Queen Hester would seem, therefore, to present the first completely evil human character since the Miracle plays, who, unrepentant of his sins until the end, is consequently irredeemable. Thus the play shows a remarkable advance on those Moralities previously discussed, in that it squarely confronts man's potential for evil. It proffers the sort of character that later playwrights, notably

Shakespeare and Marlowe, were to develop with such great dramatic effect. It is also a play which admits of a high degree of competence in man himself as adjudicator and source of retribution, for Assuerus is swift and efficient in dealing with his wicked adviser. In spite of the biblical background to the play, the secular world, particularly that of the court, is depicted as the precise sphere of interest.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORMATION PLAYS

... for there is nothing
either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

Hamlet, 11.ii. 253-54.

John Bale's *Three Laws*¹ (1530-36) marks an aggressive change of direction in the dramatists' conception of evil, and by so doing it reflects the reforming zeal as well as the virulence of the Reformation. For the first time in English drama a real division in the form of religious worship is projected, and the Church of Rome is envisaged as the heinous evil. To impress this upon the audience visually, Bale includes directions for the Vices to be dressed in the manner of Catholic churchmen.² It is true that various aspects of clerical behaviour had been criticized severely before. Chaucer's Pardoner, Monk and Friar provide evidence of this, as does Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and the Moralities discussed earlier in this thesis add their complaint,³ but these works are meant to be constructive or instructive in their censure, while Bale is deliberately destructive and emotive in his aims. Hence, while the same Morality framework is used, what was formerly seen as good but betrayed by corruption is exposed as the worst of evils, or as Rainer Pineas explains it, the nature of evil has been changed from "evil conduct to evil theology".⁴

1. *The Dramatic Writings of John Bale*, ed. John S. Farmer (London: Early English Drama Society, 1907), pp. 1-82. All references to the text of the play will be from this edition.

2. See p. 2 of above edition.

3. See for example ll. 759-62 of *Everyman*.

4. Rainer Pineas, "The English Morality Play as a Weapon of Religious Controversy", *Studies in English Literature*, 11(1962), 166.

In *Three Laws* good is seen as Christian Faith (the Protestant faith), and evil is presented as a perversion of this in the form of the Vice, Infidelity, representing the Church of Rome. Arguably this is the first play to feature a principal vice figure who dominates the other evil forces in the drama,⁵ as Infidelity commands an army of Vices whom he marshalls in pairs to oppose the virtuous three laws of Nature, Moses and Christ. He is presented as the *radix malorum* of the play, as Vindicta Dei makes explicit when she hears of the actions of the vices and exclaims: "Of whom sprung they first but of Infidelity?" (p. 70).

Looked at in one way, Bale could be seen as taking a retrograde step in the dramatic realization of evil, since Aman in *Godly Queen Hester*, would seem to be the first fully human villain in the drama since the Miracle plays. On the other hand, Bale and the other dramatists who feature this key Vice-figure are recognizing that there is more to exploit in regard to the didactic, dramatic and entertainment potential of an abstraction, and that such figures as Infidelity are exciting dramatic tools for the exposition of evil in its multifarious forms. Since Bale does not wish to concentrate on evil in one human character, as the anonymous author of *Godly Queen Hester* does, the Vice and his cohorts provide the ideal dramatic machinery for the exposition and condemnation of the evil which Bale sees as contained in Catholic theology. The functionality of this key-Vice figure backed by his companions as a means of readily attacking any evil the dramatist wishes to denounce is most striking, and this flexibility extends to the ingeniously symbolic guises in which they could be displayed.

The work of Infidelity is foreshadowed in Bale's prologue, and

5. Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 136-67

the methods he attributes to the Vice will be employed by the personified vices who serve this master-Vice:

The law of Nature, his filthy disposition,
Corrupteth with idols, and stinking sodometry;
The law of Moses with avarice and ambition
He also polluteth ...
Christ's law he defileth with cursed hyprocrisy,
And with false doctrine....

(p. 4)

In opposition to the evil represented by Infidelity, Bale pronounces the evangelical nature of the work of the three laws towards man:

Thou, law of Nature, instruct him first of all;
Thou, law of Moses, correct him for his fall;
And thou, law of Christ, give him a godly mind;
Raise him unto grace, and save him from the fiend....

(p. 9)⁶

Against each of these three laws, Infidelity despatches two particular Vices, and each makes a speech of self-revelation in true morality tradition. Idolatry extols the effects of "holy oil and water" (p. 18) and other practices of the Catholic Church, such as its methods of prayer and fasting, in a manner that reduces them to the absurd, while Sodomy is far more insidious in his proclamations:

I dwelt among the Sodomites,
And now the popish hypocrites
Embrace me everywhere.
For the clergy at Rome, and over all
For want of wives to me doth fall....

(p. 21)

He goes on in greater detail ending:

6. Craik has referred to the strong influence of William Tyndale's work on Bale's writings. See T.W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 73-75. In this regard, see also "An Exposition upon the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Chapters of Matthew", in *Writings of the Rev. William Tindal* (London: Frith and Barnes, n.d.), pp. 128ff.

Example in Pope July,
Which sought to have, in his fury,
Two lads, and to use them beastly....

(p. 23)⁷

Infidelity takes pleasure in observing Idolatry's destruction of Man's soul and Sodomy's corruption of his flesh with "filthiness". As a result of this onslaught, the Law of Nature mourns "this foul disease of body", and the following is only one brief example of the language Bale uses to describe the perversion of those in Catholic orders:

I abhor to tell the abusions bestial
That they daily use which boast their chastity;
Some at the altar to incontineny fall;
In confession some full beastly occupied be;
Among the close nuns reigneth this enormity;
Such children slay they as they chance for to
have!
And in their privies provide them of their grave.

(p. 27)

Strong stuff indeed! The play goes on in similar vein to depict the destruction of the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ, until Vindicta Dei intervenes to restore the purity of the three laws and to banish "Babylonical popery". Infidelity is punished with water, sword and fire, symbolic of Noah's flood, the defeat of the Israelites and the Last Judgment.⁸

Spivack speaks of the emotion of "hate" as natural to the Vices of the Morality play,⁹ and this is quite true, but in Bale's plays it is evident, even from the few quotations I have selected, that the language and the narrative material reflect a hatred on the dramatist's

7. Houle comments that this speech of Sodomy is possibly the first exposition on homosexuality on the English stage. See Peter J. Houle, *The English Morality and Related Drama* (Hamden: Archon, 1972), p. 139.

8. David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 129.

9. See Spivack, p. 165.

part towards the Church of Rome that goes beyond the hatred expressed by the Vice figures. And indeed it is through the words of the virtuous figures rather than the Vices that this hatred is conveyed. The dramatist's attitude is commented upon by Craik who says that, although to a large extent Bale's play draws upon Tyndale's works, the first part of the play is the dramatist's own invention. Craik goes on to say that Bale's account of "monastic loose-living" is related "with savage vivacity".¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is a matter of historical fact that Bale's ferocity exemplifies the hostility of many toward the Church of Rome (Tyndale being one of the many), and Bale's evangelical canvassing for theological reform is expressive of the spirit of the Reformation itself.¹¹ The reasons for this hostility were manifold, but not the least was the aversion to papal influence in the nation's affairs. This becomes clear in Bale's play when he urges with patriotic fervour:

Then obey your king, like as shall you behove,
For he, in his life, that Lord doth represent,
To safeguard of the just, and sinners punishment,
See that ye regard such laws as he doth make,
For they are of God, as Solomon doth report.

(p. 77)¹²

One change that is particularly evident in the Reformation and post-Reformation plays is the switch in emphasis from the virtuous life of partaking in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church, as preached in the pre-Reformation plays, to the abhorrence of such practices as superstitious nonsense (or worse), and a recommendation to live by the scriptural teachings. *Vindicta Dei* accuses Infidelity of practising false doctrine "the glory of the gospels to darken"

10. Craik, p. 74.

11. See "Comment: G.R. Elton on the Reformation" in *Renaissance and Reformation 1300-1648*, 2nd. edition, ed. G.R. Elton (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 193.

12. This concept of divinely authorised kingship, although not new in itself, becomes a feature of the Tudor Homilies and the history itself.

(p. 71). Hence the theology of the Roman Church is presented as an evil force which acts as a barrier through which the illuminating rays of Christ's teachings are prevented from penetrating. The Church is referred to as "that counterfeit Church...without the scriptures"¹³ (p. 50), and the gospels are interpreted in such a way that they lend authority to the new theology which will banish the old "damnable darkness" - darkness being a favourite image by which the evil of popery is conveyed.

Apart from the savagery of Bale's attack on Catholicism, the play is notable for its structure and the complexity of its concept, within which a parallel is drawn "between Old Testament transgression against natural and Mosaic law and the corruption of the gospel by the Church of Rome".¹⁴ The visual effect of evil is conveyed most impressively, particularly in the maltreatment of Christ's Law which takes place on stage, and therefore becomes a vivid reminder of the treatment of Christ during his Passion. The biblical echoes are quite resonant in "*Hic veste spoliatum, sordidioribus induunt*", and in Pseudodocctrine's demand: "wilt thou here abjure or no?", and Evangelicum's reply: "I will neither abjure nor yet recant God's glory" (p. 66).¹⁵ Bale is clearly identifying the Protestant cause with Christ and the Catholic theology with Caiphas and the chief

13. An important aim of the play is "its insistence on a vernacular Bible". See Craik, p. 75. The burning of Christ's Law (pp. 66-67) is a vivid example of the Catholic view of a vernacular Bible. In this respect, it is also interesting to read the editor's summary at the end of the "Preface to *The Obedience of a Christian Man*" in *Writings of Tyndal*, p. 93:

Tindal then shows at considerable length, that "the scriptures ought to be in the English tongue", and that "the scripture is the trial of all doctrine and the right touchstone".

14. Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 95.

15. See Matthew 26.63, 67.

priests. This is an effective means of glorifying the one and vilifying the other, which is always a part of the propagandist's aims.

The divine intervention at the end of the play is a reassurance that all evil will be punished eventually: "Thinkest thou that God sleepeth, and will not/His defend..." (p. 68). This grand statement is uttered by a God who corresponds with Bale's Protestant concept of the deity, and so it acts as a divine justification of Bale's condemnation of the evil which he considers as residing in the theology of the Roman Church.

In *King Johan* (1530-1538)¹⁶ Bale carries on his campaign for a vernacular Bible, but his main concern in this play is to insist on the supremacy of the king in both the civil and religious estates of his realm.

Bale depicts a saintly King John who enters upon the stage proclaiming:

Bothe Peter and Pawle makyth plenteosse utterauns;
How that all pepell shuld shew ther trew alegyauns
To ther lawfull kyng, Christ Jesu dothe consent....

(ll. 4-6)

He goes on to justify his claims by insisting on the legality of his succession, and that it is "by the wyll of God" that he reigns. His monologue is interrupted by the appearance of England, who is dressed as a poor, unhappy widow, to whom John is kind and attentive, as befits a king who constantly quotes the bible to support his own beliefs.¹⁷ England supports the king's claim for full allegiance:

16. *Four Morality Plays*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 313-430. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

17. See for instance, Exodus 22.22; Deuteronomy 27.19; which recommend kindness to widows.

Trwly of the devyll they are that do
 onythyng
 To the subdewyng of ony Christen kyng;
 For he be good or bade, he is of Godes apoyntyng:
 The good for the good, the badde ys for yll doyng.

(ll. 101-04)

Through John's questioning of the Widow England, we learn of her dire predicament and become acquainted with the evil of the play - the evil of *Three Laws* - this time represented initially by the Vice, Sedition, whose birthplace is "the holy cyte of Rome" (l. 183). In typical Morality fashion he proclaims himself:

I am Sedycyon playne:
 In every relygyon and munkysh secte I rayne,
 Havyn you prynces in scorne, hate and dysdayne.

(ll. 186-88)

John's dilemma is clearly inferred from these lines, but it is interesting to note how Bale teases out the nature of the evil about which England is complaining. She speaks of the

lubbers as have dysgysed heades in their hoodes,
 Whych in ydelnes do lyve by other menns goodes:
 Monkes, chanons, and nones....

(ll. 36-38)

She informs John that these "lubbers" follow the "wyld bore of Rome" (l. 71). Eager for further enlightenment John says: "By the bore of Rome I trow thow menynt the Pope" (l. 75). On confirmation of this, he naively asks: "And why dost thow thus compare hym to a swyne?" (l. 77). Accordingly England is able to elaborate most explicitly the nature of the evil she suffers. The effect of such a presentation is that John can appear unprejudiced, saintly, and eager to right all injustices, while England is projected as the suffering Widow England who confides in her sovereign, complaining of heavy burdens, the authenticity of which cannot be questioned. Bale continues to present John and England as supporting each other throughout the play so that

John's argument for full authority is justified, and identified with the welfare of England. To make even more righteous the cause which each espouses, England claims God as her spouse whom "thes vyle popish swyne hath clene exyled" (ℓ. 107). Dramatically opposed to the idea of God as England's spouse is John's opinion that the "Romysh Churche ...[is] a mete spouse for the fynd" (ℓℓ. 369-70). All these means are very apt propaganda weapons.

As in *Three Laws* Bale condemns the Catholic theology, but here he goes into far greater detail. Prayers, ceremonies, Latin chants and various other religious practices are listed in great number, ridiculed and parodied. The sacrament of Confession is seen merely as part of the secret service network of the Roman Church. John, unaware of the church's seditious activities, is again shown as eager for information when he questions Sedition about Confession and is told:

... by Confessyon the Holy Father knoweth
Throw-out all Christendom what to his holynes growth.

(ℓℓ. 272-73)

Monastic orders are named from lines 442-458 in a manner which suggests an absurd proliferation of religious institutions throughout England.¹⁸ The overall implication is that the church is so complex and deviously organized that "pore Englonde" is being completely dominated and impoverished and the people manipulated and confounded by sophistical arguments.¹⁹ The frequent elaboration of this many-faceted organization by figures representing the Church serves to substantiate England's complaint to the king that it is through the church that she appears "so barelye" (ℓ. 59). John makes the accusation that the multifarious "sectes" of the church exist to confound the scriptures, and Clergy's

18. Happé, pp. 649-50.

19. See Clergy's handling of Nobility's question. ℓℓ. 609-18.

persuasion of Nobility (ll. 609-18), the suppression of the vernacular bible and the damning nature of the conversations between Sedition, Clergy and the other Vices support both the king's and England's claims.²⁰

Bale takes care to explain John's shameful reputation by attributing it to Catholic chroniclers: "Yow pristes are the cause that Chronycles doth defame/So many prynces..." (ll. 585-6). John's successful rule and generosity are underlined (ll. 574-79)²¹ and when he finally gives way to the Church's demands, Bale has the king make it clear that it is not from cowardice but from praiseworthy concern for his subjects that he does so (ll. 1719-22). The saintly picture of John which the dramatist projects is heightened by the King's last words as he dies from poison allegedly administered by a monk, Simon of Swinstead.²² Like Christ he has been betrayed by a "false Judas kysse" (l. 2144), and like him he begs forgiveness for those who have plotted his death:

There is no malyce to the malyce of the clergie.
Well, the Lord God of heaven on me and them have mercye.

(ll. 2158-59)

20. See particularly ll. 698-721; ll. 725-34; ll. 1074-85.

21. Bale's claim that John gave Anjou to Arthur is queried by Happé, p. 651 (notes to l. 579). In view of Bale's portrayal of the king it is interesting to consider a more objective view. See W.L. Warren, *King John* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 280. Warren says that John's greatest fault was his impatience. His summary of John's character ends by stating that "He had the mental abilities of a great king, but the inclinations of a petty tyrant".

22. According to W.L. Warren (pp. 274-75) John "contracted dysentery as a result of over-indulgence in their [the citizens' of Lynn] hospitality". The Abbot of Croxton did tend him in his illness and administered the last rites, but he was able to make a will. Warren makes no mention of suspicious circumstances, but it is clear how the suspicion might have arisen. One of the sources for Bale's play, *The Brut*, also recounts the poisoning of the king by a monk. See *The Brut, or, The Chronicles of England*, Pt. 1, ed. Friedrich W.D. Brie (London: EETS), pp. 169-70.

As in *Three Laws*, Bale's personal attitude to the evil he depicts may be identified. It is not merely a moral aversion to an evil which is similar to a morality writer's horror of sin or Shakespeare's abhorrence of rebellion, for example. In Bale's plays the virulence of his language and accusations reveal a very real personal hatred and even vindictiveness in his attitude towards Catholicism. There is considerable evidence to support such a contention. Bale made a major revision of the text which had the effect of increasing his condemnation of Sedition's role "making him more of a Vice".²³ Happé draws attention to Bale's intensification of bitterness as attested to by his insertion of additional matter in the play (ll. 991-1011) concerning the actions of Usurped Power,²⁴ which roundly condemns the Pope's activities as a proliferator of religious orders and practices in order "to drowne the Scriptures for doubte of heresy" (l. 999). This insertion also foretells how the Pope will force King John to resign his crown. Moreover the dramatist is meticulous in denigrating all religious orders, adding the Jesuits to his list (l. 450), possibly after 1540, which was the founding date of that order.²⁵ He certainly manipulates existing historical material in order to vindicate and sanctify John, offering him as a saintly martyr for the "true" faith of Protestantism against the evil "wyld bore of Rome", and the actual merging of Usurped Power with the Pope is clear indication of his personal attitude towards Catholicism. After John's death, Bale shifts the time sequence of the play to focus on the actual Reformation era. Imperial Majesty, as Henry VIII, succeeds where the initiator, John, failed. He is the ouster of Catholic domination and an effective reformer of the three estates of his realm represented by Clergy,

23. See Happé, p. 657, notes to l. 1665.

24. Happé, p. 653.

25. Happé, p. 649, notes to ll. 442ff.

Nobility and Civil Order. They, in turn, illustrate the extent of their reformation by recommending the hanging of Sedition who effectively incriminates himself with every boastful line: "I sought to have served yow lyke as I ded Kynge John/But that Veryte stopte me..." (ll. 2575-76). True to his role as Vice, he leaves the stage resigned to his end, uttering lines which show that Bale is very well aware of the devastating potency of parody:

Some man tell the Pope...
 That I maye be put in the Holye Letanye
 With Thomas Beckett, for I thynke I am as wurthye.
 Praye to me with candels for I am a saynt alreadye.
 O blessed Saynt Partryck, I see the, I, verylye.

(ll. 2587-92)

A foreshadowing of the main motifs of the Chronicle and history plays is conveyed in the struggle by John to quell rebellious factions. But here they are not arrogant barons²⁶ who pose a threat to the nation's security, but "trayterous pristes... pernycouse Antichristes" (ll. 2080-81), who seek to subdue the king and by fostering "spiritual blindness cause subjects oft tymes ther Kynges to dissobaye" (ll. 1554-55). Certainly Bale presents a struggle for supremacy between church and state, but the church in this instance is seen as possessing evil theology and as a threat not only because of this, but also because of its foreign power base, political ambitions and its heavy taxing of John's realm (ll. 1738-44). The cause John espouses is also both religious and political, and both aspects are presented by Bale as being interdependent and indeed representing a godly cause - hence the close relationship of John and the Widow England.

Bale improves on the performance of the Vice in *King Johan*, and the consequent lively portrayal of his character heightens the

26. Historically, of course, John did have to contend with powerful barons.

sense of the active power of evil. As the intriguer *par excellence* he moves swiftly about the nation and between England and Rome in order to foster and to generate sedition against the king. Thus he fulfils his nature and the duties which he proclaims as peculiarly his own (ll. 187-88). As Spivack notes, Sedition is not the source of the other vices in the play as Infidelity is in *Three Laws*, but rather "the culminator of the evils that subvert a kingdom after the other vices have done their work and paved the way for him".²⁷ This is a logical direction for Bale to take as his play depicts political and religious concerns as inseparable.

But it is not without humour that the Vice is portrayed. He has the contrived language lapses and swift costume changes that are part of the Vice's baggage as intriguer, since it is by deceit and confusion that he obtains his ends. In his haste to disguise himself as a bishop, monk, priest or holy friar, he trips verbally as he excuses himself from John's presence:

I have a great mynd to be a lecherous man -
A wengonce take yt! I wold saye a relygous man.

(ll. 304-05)

The same kind of performance comes from Clergy when he pretends to be repentant (ll. 510-14). The effect is comic, but it emphasizes the dangerous nature of evil - its capacity to catch its victim unaware. Hence Bale shows himself as alert to the dramatic potential of the Vice as well as to the entertainment appeal that he had for the audience since it is far more effective in these Protestant polemical plays to have a Catholic Vice revealing his own reprehensible nature and practices and those of his fellow clergy (the lesser Vices), than to

27. Spivack, p. 144.

have a Protestant protagonist denouncing Catholicism.²⁸ As Happé says "Bale's particular contribution is to use him in religious controversy".²⁹

A different sort of Reformation play is *Lusty Juventus* (1547-53)³⁰ by R. Wever, performed during the reign of Edward VI.³¹ Apart from Hypocrisy's speech (pp.64-66) where some of Bale's anti-clerical sentiments are echoed, it resembles the earlier Morality play with predictable modifications. Unlike the preceding plays of Bale, it focusses primarily upon evil conduct once more, while evil theology is shown as one of the causes of Youth's ignorance. The introduction to the play describes it as concerned with the "frailtie of youth: of nature prone to vyce: by grace and good counsayll traynable to vertue" (p. 42), and this is the understanding of man that Wever outlines. Juventus is briefly converted from a life taken up with the pursuit of pleasure when he is persuaded by Good Counsell and Knowledge to follow the precepts of the Scriptures. Not to be outdone, the devil despatches his son, Hypocrisy, to reverse the good work of these virtuous influences, and to effect the downfall of Juventus by infecting him with "carnal pleasures". Hypocrisy, assuming the guise of Friendship, easily diverts Juventus from his scriptural preoccupations and following his father's advice, introduces him to Abominable Living. Good Counsell returns and mourns the lack of parental guidance which contributes to Youth's inability to discipline his lusts. Parents themselves are seen by Wever as deficient in their understanding of

28. Pineas, p. 171.

29. Happé, p. 651, notes to l. 627.

30. *Dodsley's Old English Plays*, Vol. II, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874), pp. 41-102. All references to text are from this edition.

31. See footnote, p. 101 of this edition of play.

God's precepts because they "were wrapped in ignorance,/Being deceived by false preachers" (p. 57).

Hence, Juventus is depicted as a victim of Catholic doctrines in the sense that, in the first instance, he is ignorant and ill-disciplined, and in the second, he is deceived by Satan (p. 99), since Hypocrisy must dissemble in order to gain his confidence. This sort of sentiment together with Hypocrisy's speech (pp. 65-66) regarding his past deception of mankind through the agency of "holy cardinals, holy popes...", who disguised their true nature behind a pretence of "holiness and religion", comprise Wever's case against the Catholic Church.

The highest tribute that Wever can pay to the spirit of the Reformation is embodied in the devil's complaint that his life is now indeed made difficult as young men "will live, as the Scripture teacheth them" (p. 62). Hence, in *Lusty Juventus*, evil is again represented as the Catholic Church, and it is seen as having performed the work of the devil in pre-Reformation days and to be struggling to continue to do so still. Spivack notes that this is the devil's sole appearance in extant Morality plays between 1500-1560.³² Certainly his entrance as champion of the Catholic Church would have excited the approval of many in a contemporary audience.

Wever depicts man's nature as frail and inclined to sin, which is not new in Morality drama, nor is the despair Juventus feels when he recognizes that in his "first age" he has deliberately chosen the path to his own destruction: "I would to God I had never been born!" (p. 95). Good Counsell encourages him and refers to God's Merciful Promises, and the latter comes onto the stage preaching a different

32. Spivack, p. 131.

lesson to that of the earlier Catholic Moralities. Gone is the repentance, contrition and penance as symbolized in the sacrament of Confession, and in its place is the simple admonition:

If unto the Lord's word you do your ears incline,
And observe these things which he hath commanded,
This sinful state, in which you have lain,
Shall be forgotten and never more remembered....

(p. 97)

The concept of God which these Reformation plays promotes is very much that of a merciful God provided man believes and follows the teachings of the Scripture. However man is not allowed to forget his sinful nature. God forgives him because he is merciful and not because man repents and is sorry as was the case in the Catholic Moralities. God's Merciful Promises tells Juventus: "For me his mercy sake thou shalt attain his grace,/And not for thine own desertes..." (p.97).

Lusty Juventus is certainly an inferior play to *King Johan*, but it does project an image of man who has the capacity for both good and evil. Therefore, it possesses the rudiments of tragedy which the other play lacks with its stringently defined areas of good and evil, contrived to elicit an emotive response, as befits its propagandist aims.

Respublica (1553)³³, ascribed to Nicholas Udall, is a pro-Catholic Morality play which differs greatly in tone from the preceding Reformation plays particularly those of Bale. Udall makes no virulent attack on theological doctrine, but focusses instead on the social evils which he associates with the Reformation. The play deals with the immediate past and identifies Avarice as the root of all these social evils. The dramatist has used some of Bale's methods, however, in

33. *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, eds. Edgar T. Schell and J.D. Shuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 235-307. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

that England is represented as a poor, depressed widow to whom complaints concerning prevailing social injustices are made by one of her peasant subjects.³⁴ The overall tone of the play is, nevertheless, lightly satirical with the usual comic antics performed by the Vices and a dénouement which is merciful. Hence, Udall's method resembles the traditional morality design in that there is a fall from grace when the central figure, Respublica, becomes a victim of the evils of the Reformation and a subsequent redemption when Respublica is eventually made aware of the criminality of her advisers and, following repentance, is forgiven and restored.

Although the morality convention is predominant there is also the idea of a *de casibus* tragedy in that Respublica is part victim having fallen from "so florent estate" (11.i.431) to a condition of decay, but as Farnham points out, there is no blaming of Fortune for this decline.³⁵ Respublica takes a more pragmatic attitude, for in spite of her plaintive *ubi sunt* on the fate of past empires, she concludes by attributing all her problems to misgovernment. This attitude continues the searching for solutions by attention to worldly conduct and worldly happiness begun in *Magnificence*. God may still intervene, which he does when he sends Misericordia, Veritas, Justitia and Pax, but their role is an earthly one as they assist Respublica to terminate the political corruption within her estate and punish the offenders.³⁶ The result of this alteration in the traditional role of the Four Daughters of God is a fusion of religious and secular concerns, but the emphasis is on the secular since the eschatological figures act in the political arena as "a sort of *posse comitatus* on the trail of social evils",³⁷ and the final adjudicator is Nemesis

34. This is also noted by Potter, p. 89.

35. Farnham, p. 228.

36. Farnham, p. 229.

37. Spivack, p. 70.

who is identified in the Prologue as Queen Mary (ll. 49-53). The religious function of the Four Daughters is to effect the repentance of Respublica and thereby to restore her to happiness and good government, but this function is clearly an expedient inherent in the morality convention which is used here to bring about political prosperity.

In accordance with the Morality tradition, evil is centred in the Vice-figures, but particularly in Avarice, the Vice of the play, who devises the stratagems and disguises of his none too competent companions. Their plot to divide the property and wealth of the kingdom between them foreshadows the same kind of behaviour by Richard's evil advisers in *Woodstock*, and Udall presents it with much the same light, satirical wit. Oppression relates his treatment of the church hierarchy:

We enformed them and we deformed them
We conformed them and we reformed them.

(111.vi.826-27)

This sort of humour contrasts sharply with the obscenities with which Bale portrays evil and it is interesting to note that Udall's Vice-figures stand for ethical and not theological evils as Bale's do. Udall's method possibly argues an astuteness lacking in Bale as the religious climate of the time was scarcely stable. On the other hand, the comic treatment of evil emphasizes the fact that human nature does have a tendency towards such vices, particularly avarice. The merciful dénouement underlines this - such vices will always be with us, and will, therefore, have to be curbed and controlled continually. This reflects a humane tolerance of human frailty which resembles the medieval attitude towards human wickedness rather than the Calvinist one which becomes apparent in later Protestant Morality plays.

Enough is as Good as a Feast (1560-69)³⁸ by William Wager is yet another Protestant morality play which denounces the evils of Catholicism but does so mostly in a satirical vein. It refers to the injustices of the persecutions under Queen Mary (ll. 245-46), the vices ridicule various Catholic practices, and the figure of Ghostly Ignorance is notable for his sermons which are guaranteed to "destroy devotion" and force their listeners "in clear sunshine for light to grope" (ll. 608, 610). However, by far the greatest interest in the play is provided by Wager's division of the mankind figure into Heavenly Man and Worldly Man in a sort of early Jekyll and Hyde experiment. Appropriately, Heavenly Man shows no inclination whatsoever towards evil - is, in fact, never subjected to temptation - but Worldly Man, in spite of his brief enlightenment, becomes the victim of the shrewdly contrived machinations of the Vice of the play, Covetousness, who has the usual ingenious stock of disguises and stratagems at hand for himself and his cohorts.

Worldly Man's sin is, as his name suggests, a preoccupation with the amassing of worldly wealth. The function of the virtuous in the play is not to condemn material goods, but to preach against an overpowering desire for a temporal wealth which neglects a concern for "treasures celestial" (ll. 636-37). The worldly are not condemned "because they have too much,/But because they receive it not with contentation" (ll. 169-70). In this respect *Enough* has some affinity with *Magnificence*, since its purpose is to teach man how to live in this world and manage his material possessions, although the former preaches against covetousness and sheer greed and the latter against extravagance. Worldly Man could never be accused of extravagance.

38. *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*. Eds. Edgar T. Schell and J.D. Shuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 367-417. All references to the text of the play are from this edition. Subsequent references will be denoted as "*Enough*".

His Tenant, Servant and Hireling are witnesses to his alarming capacity for rapaciousness, and the lengths to which he will go to increase his wealth are explicit in the reassurance which he gives to Precipitation that no methods are beyond him "if it were mine own father to kill" (ℓ. 947).

The inevitable impulse of the play places Heavenly Man among God's "dear elect" (ℓ. 221), since his piety is always beyond reproach, and Worldly Man with his propensity for excessive greed and exploitation of others firmly among the damned. When he is dying his thoughts are not on God, repentance or salvation, but wistfully focussed on worldly glories:

Oh Policy, if I might not die, what a fellow would I be!
In all this country should be none like unto me.

(ℓℓ. 1325-26)

Since there is no remedy for his sickness, the Physician finds himself treated in the same peremptory fashion as the Servant and Hireling, who are never justly recompensed for their labours: "For these news to give thee anything, in my heart I cannot find" (ℓ. 1374). Therefore, Worldly Man dies completely heedless of the need for repentance or salvation and firmly entrenched in his evil mould. Although there is a Calvinist influence detectable in all this, Wager does not seem to make a rigid barrier between the redeemable and the irredeemable, although, it is true that Heavenly Man and Worldly Man meet only in the opening scene. Worried about Worldly Man's brief conversion, Covetousness remarks that God does forgive repentant sinners (ℓℓ. 406-07), and Inconsideration agrees, adding: "Many have been made heavenly that worldly have been" (ℓ. 409). Hence the possibility of salvation is present, however precarious it might be. Wager seems rather to suggest that man is very much at the mercy of his own nature, and

concentrates on projecting this nature as the controlling factor of man's conduct. Covetousness emphasizes this as he turns to the audience and says:

Lo, see you not how the Worldly Man showeth his kind?
As sick as he is, on his goods is all his mind.

(ll. 1323-24)

Again the Servant, bemoaning the callous treatment he has received, recalls his master's brief reformation: "I thought he would not be heavenly long,/For that to his nature were clean contrary and wrong" (ll. 996-97). Worldly Man's nature is moulded by his avarice and callous exploitation of others.

The moral of the play, implicit in its title, is elucidated, ironically enough, by Worldly Man himself during his short conversion:

The proverb sayeth Enough is as Good as a Feast;
He that hath enough and cannot be content,
In my judgement is worse than a beast....

(ll. 634-36)

These sentiments are recalled later by the Physician when he advises Worldly Man to "Look up, for the love of God! Do not like a beast decay!" (l. 1356). A major part of Worldly Man's sin is, in this sense, a betrayal of his true nature, briefly recognizable during his conversion, but throughout most of the play, perverted by extreme covetousness and ambition.

Bevington comments on the unequal attention given to the forces of good and evil in the play.³⁹ It is certainly true that Worldly Man and his vices occupy the stage most of the time. Yet Worldly Man is still very much the representative mankind figure with his capacity for both good and evil in spite of the dramatist's bifurcation of

39. Bevington, p. 159.

the mankind figure. The long exposition of evil in which the Vices partake makes Worldly Man's culpability all the more significant when he employs them as his stewards. By doing so he becomes like them, and this idea is elaborated upon by Contentation when Satan leaves the stage carrying the dead Worldly Man on his back:

He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with the same,
And he that keepeth company with those that be vicious
Shall at the length grow like unto the same....

(ll. 1472-74)⁴⁰

Even more precisely, from the point of view that his nature controls his conduct, Worldly Man is like one of the lesser Vices in that he too, both allegorically and literally, is dominated by Covetousness, the *radix malorum* of the play.

By contrast, Heavenly Man's role resembles that of a virtue, scarcely that of a human being, and he is certainly not assailable by evil. And it is in this also that the play is interesting, because touching perfection though he is, Heavenly Man can still say:

... Oh Father Omnipotent!
Thy mercies, Lord, and not my deserts, truly,
Have caused those joys to me to be sent.

(ll. 1528-30)

In a way he could be uttering something like: "There but for the grace of God go I", but I do not think that it is quite this. Rather is the dramatist seeing all human nature as fallen; certainly some are more redeemable and praiseworthy than others, but for all that, humanity is still tainted. In this Wager surely reveals the Calvinist influence in Protestantism, and it is this influence which seems to introduce a pessimism into the drama of the period together with

40. Since the associations man makes are important, this could well be the reason why Heavenly Man appears with Worldly Man only when the latter is capable of choosing good.

many of the requirements for tragic conflict. Although I would agree with Potter that it is "premature to see darkness and doubt in the tragedy of Worldly Man"⁴¹ (If it can be defined as tragedy⁴²), I would still maintain that Wager's emphasis on man's preference for indulging his passions rather than heeding virtuous advice, projects an image of man that is far less laudable than that of the earlier Morality. Through this stress on sinfulness which in effect rejects salvation, there may be no questioning of the divine order, but surely there is some gloom injected.⁴³ BY comparison with the retribution represented by God's Plague, the "stroke of God", Adversity, in the play *Magnificence* is little more than a kindly corrective. However, Worldly Man's punishment is not unjust or arbitrary. His conduct, especially towards others and in the death scene, attests to this. His story is not tragic in the sense that Woodes portrays his protagonist's in *The Conflict of Conscience*, although there is an element of tragedy in the way in which he is deceived and manipulated by the vices following his conversion. Dramatically and didactically, the warnings sounded in the play by the Tenant (ll. 1052-53) and Prophet are effective, as also are the visitations of God's Plague and the appearance of Satan. It must surely have had a more salutary effect on the audience to see an unrepentant and hardened sinner carried off to hell on Satan's back "to lie burning forever in pain" (l. 1467), than to see him suddenly and improbably reformed and saved.

41. Potter, p. 119.

42. See Bevington, pp. 162-63. He states that figures like Worldly Man in no way meet "the Aristotelian definition of tragic flaw, for they are all so compounded of flaws that they are devoid of grace. They in fact conform to no declared artistic pattern of tragedy, other than a popular concept of man's evil as declared in many proverbs...."

43. See Potter, p. 119.

The capacity for tragic development which lies dormant in plays like *Lusty Juventus* and *Enough is as Good as a Feast* is realized in Nathaniel Woodes's *The Conflict of Conscience* (1572-81).⁴⁴ The play is based on the life of Francesco Spiera, an Italian lawyer, who was converted to Protestantism in his forties.⁴⁵ He was tried for heresy in Venice on May 25th, 1548, and fearful of forfeiting his worldly possessions, he recanted. Eventually he was besieged by doubts of conscience, but in spite of the efforts of many earnest people to reassure him of God's mercy to repentant sinners, he found himself unable to pray, considering himself not to be one of the elect. He made attempts to end his life, first by starvation, and then by killing himself with a knife. Prevented from taking this action by his two sons, he nevertheless died at Citadella on December 27th, 1548. There were no precise details regarding his actual death. Celesta Wine states that "Spiera was soon reported to have committed suicide, although the early narratives did not give warrant for such a report."⁴⁶ One of Spiera's counsellors was Garibaldi, who later wrote an account of his ordeal, and it is thought to be a translation of this work that influenced Woodes's play.

Woodes follows this account closely, but in the second issue of the play he supplies an alternative ending. The first version depicts Philologus committing suicide while overcome with despair; the second, with little alteration, reports a repentant death.⁴⁷ Woodes's choice of the morality convention for his play

44. *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, eds. Edgar T. Schell and J.D. Shuchter (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, Inc., 1969), pp. 475-550. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

45. My information regarding Spiera's life is drawn from Celesta Wine's well-researched account: "Nathaniel Wood's *Conflict of Conscience*", *PMLA*, 50(1935), 661-78.

46. Celesta Wine, p. 666.

47. Both endings are printed in the edition cited.

is extremely effective in providing him with the flexibility for offering these two endings, and it is also suited to the projection of his didactic aims. Death by suicide heightens the tragic potential of the play, but a repentant death completes Woodes's lesson more effectively if the play is considered to be expounding a Protestant theology which emphasizes a merciful God and if it is directed at man in general. However, it is interesting to note the incidences of Calvinist theory within the play which give it its tragic inclination and intensify the seriousness of the sin of the protagonist in his choice of material pleasure, wealth and Catholicism, in preference to spiritual gain through adherence to Protestantism.

The dramatist presents two evils; the one of evil theology, the other of wrongful choice of conduct; and he gives to the characters who represent the evil theology and to Philologus who makes the wrong choice, a knowledge and deliberation which stresses the culpability of their conduct. Although the Vice is supposed to be amoral, the continual asides of Hypocrisy, which comment on the behaviour of the vices, invite the audience to condemn the manipulation and coercion of the laity by Avarice and Tyranny all the more so, because they are so cynically aware of the nature of the methods they use to promote their control. The real emphasis of the play, however, is, as the title suggests, on the conflicts of conscience which Philologus endures when he recants during his trial for heresy, and later when, confronted by Horror, he is made aware of the enormity of his crime, and is plagued by a scrupulosity of conscience which makes him cry despairingly:

I am refused utterly; I quite from God am whirled;
My name within the Book of Life had never residence;
Christ prayed not, Christ suffered not my sins to
recompence,

But only for the Lord's elect, of which sort I am none.
I feel his justice towards me, his mercy all is gone.

(V.ii.1756-60)⁴⁸

It is in this last conflict where the Calvinist theories are so strongly expressed, but by Philologus, to whom no special credence should be given as he has been wrong or blind before. But then Calvinism is able to argue very effectively for its beliefs using error or blindness as part of its arsenal, because it is nothing if not deadly in its logic. The debate form in which Woodes has set his play is exceedingly efficacious for projecting this logic as well as the religious arguments and the didactic purpose of the morality. The didactic purpose of the play requires special attention, as within the play there is also a conflict between the Protestant theology which envisages a merciful God and the Calvinist concept of a God who predestines damnation regardless of man's efforts. A problem exists in that if the Calvinist doctrine is correct, man can do nothing to effect his own salvation. How, then, does one apportion blame to the human being?

Philologus's crime consists in his disregard for the admonitions of Spirit and Conscience, when he is called upon by the vices to confess to heresy, and his deliberate choice of worldly rather than spiritual life. Importantly, Philologus's betrayal of Protestantism is also seen as a betrayal of Christ. That Philologus is well-versed in Protestant theology and acknowledges himself to be firmly convinced of its rightness is made abundantly clear in his wordy debate with Mathetes and by his intelligent argument in the trial scene. His

48. Compare line 1757 with: "...the names of God's children have been written in the book of life from the beginning." See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 11, transl. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, n.d.), Book 111, Ch. XXIV, p. 229.

culpability is made all the greater when, so knowledgeable, he is nevertheless seduced by Suggestion who shows Philologus a mirror in which is reflected the "joys unspeakable" of this world, and having glanced at these, Philologus surrenders with horrifying completeness:

I am fully resolved without further demeanor,
In these delights to take my whole solace,
And what pain soever hereby I incur,
Whether heaven or hell, whether God's wrath or grace,
This glass of delight I will ever embrace....

(IV.i. 1404-08)

Philologus is given two chances to retrieve his error after his submission when Spirit and Conscience urge him to retrace his steps before venturing too far.⁴⁹ Philologus shows that he understands the seriousness of Spirit's warning:

The wrath of God it doth me tell doth stand my face before;
Wherefore I hold it best to cease that race I have begun.

(IV.ii. 1490-91)

However, Suggestion easily diverts him and Philologus says that he is prepared to face "what evil soever come" in order to pursue earthly joys. A stronger stance is taken by Conscience who engages Suggestion as well as Philologus in active debate. Philologus, accused of preferring "mundane joys" to heavenly life is warned that God has said: " 'Whoso my name before men shall not know,/I shall not know him when as Judge I shall sit in my seat' " (IV.iii.1630-31). Philologus experiences the struggle between flesh and spirit and, although he admits that he thinks that "Conscience speaketh truth", decides in favour of worldly pleasure. Hence Philologus shows in his first conflict of conscience that he recognizes the validity of Conscience's argument, but in spite of this moral awareness, decides to choose

49. This scene is suggestive of the counselling that Faustus receives from the Good and Evil Angels in Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*, as is also the despair and its consequences which both Philologus and Faustus experience. This is also noted by Bevington, p. 245.

earthly pleasures before eternal life. It is clear that Philologus does not take the wrong path in the way that the naive Everyman does, although both make the mistake of trusting in worldly goods, and he is certainly more morally knowledgeable than other Morality heroes.⁵⁰

I have stated that Calvinist influences sway Philologus's stance in his final and fatal conflict of conscience. These immediately become apparent in the way that Philologus reacts when, at the top of Fortune's wheel, and heedless of "what to my soul betide/So long as this prosperity and wealth by me abide" (V.ii.1696-97) he is cut short by God's retributive agent, "Confusion and Horror-of-the-mind", who states that he has been sent "to correct impenitents". Like Faustus, Philologus is only aware of a wrathful God and, like him, he is unable to repent:

... for God is fully bent
In fury for to punish me with pains intolerable,
Neither to call to him for grace or pardon am I able;
My sin is unto death; I feel Christ's death doth me no good,⁵¹
Neither for my behoof did Christ shed his most precious blood.

(V.ii.1735-39)

He expresses the same kind of bondage as Faustus does: "My spirit to Satan is in thrall, I can it not thence get" (l. 1835). Casting aside the arguments of Theologus and Eusebius concerning past sinners who merited God's forgiveness, Philologus objects: "but I am

50. It is true that the protagonist in *Nature* is a very willing sinner, but at no time does he display the theological knowledge or the capacity for moral argument that Philologus does.

51. The same sense of complete isolation caused by the character's involvement in evil is expressed in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. (See V.iii.200-04).

reprobate" (l. 1997).⁵² Faced with the agonies of a tormented conscience, he at last comprehends, in his heart as well as his mind, the full measure of his culpability in choosing wordly eminence through recantation of his religious beliefs. Horror recalls the counselling of Conscience which Philologus ignored, and the latter is overwhelmed by the weight of his guilt and the sense that his sin is justly unpardonable. The scrupulosity of his conscience-seeking now, evident though disregarded in the earlier conflict of conscience, does convey the logical conclusion that Philologus deserves damnation. It is this sort of meticulous logic that is fundamental to Calvinist thought, but in adhering to its stringent justice it denies Theologus's claim that "God is gracious" and his mercy boundless, for "Christ's death alone for all your sins a perfect ransom paid" (V.iii.1779). Philologus commits the same sin of intellectual pride that Faustus does in presuming to set limits to God's power. Calvinism itself does this and perhaps it is this conflict within Protestantism itself which encouraged Woodes to offer a different conclusion to his play. The second ending shows what could and, perhaps, what ought to have been Philologus's choice of conduct in his second and more demanding conflict of conscience. It is therefore possible, if conjectural, to suggest that the evils which Woodes wishes to emphasize in the play are Philologus's deliberate decision to renounce the faith that he defends at some length and to great effect, and the consequent greater evil of despair where he fails to trust in God's mercy. It may well be that Woodes had only one reason for supplying two endings to his play, and that this was due, as Bevington says, to "the struggle

52. See Calvin, p. 181:

As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name and the sanctification of his Spirit, he affords an indication of the judgment that awaits them.

between the impulse toward biography and the impulse towards generic representation".⁵³ However, it is tempting to suggest that Woodes, as a clergyman himself, may also have meant to give voice to the tension which existed within the Protestant Church regarding the doctrine of reprobation.⁵⁴ Sanders says that the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation "brands the reprobate indelibly with the mark of Cain",⁵⁵ and it is this sense of being irretrievably damned which permeates Philologus's mind so that he cannot consider himself redeemable under any conditions. As a reprobate, he is cast outside the elect for whom "Christ shed his most precious blood" (V.ii.1739).⁵⁶ Bereft of grace and faith he can only "confess that I for sin am justly thrown to hell" (V.iii.1804). Such complete resignation and sense of abandonment is not conducive to a frame of mind in which he can beg for mercy, for Philologus's heart knows no hope but only despair.

Opposing the virulent doctrine of reprobation, John Donne was

53. Bevington, p. 250. I have already commented upon the lack of factual information regarding Spiera's death. See Wine, p. 666.

54. See Charles H. George and Katherine George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation 1570-1640* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), p. 58:

... around two points of sensitivity in the doctrine there was considerable discussion, if not precisely dispute: the question of the exact quality of the permanence of election or reprobation; and the question of the kind or degree of knowledge of his spiritual estate which the Christian could possess....The bulk of English opinion... ventured a much stronger positive statement regarding the permanence of election or reprobation than did Roman Catholicism.

55. Sanders, p. 244.

56. Calvin, p. 181:

...God has once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible, judgment.

later to ask:

And shouldst thou curse any man that had never offended,
never transgrest, never trespass thee? Can God have done
so? ... Will God curse man, before man can have sinned?

He goes on that unless a man "commit the sinnes of a *hundred yeares*
in ten ... till he infect and poyson that age ... God comes not to
curse him".⁵⁷

If we examine *The Conflict of Conscience* closely in order to
substantiate the assumption that Woodes may have been concerned to air
the paradox that occurs when a merciful God is alleged to have chosen
his elect from the beginning of time, we have only to compare the
arguments of Theologus and Eusebius with those of Philologus when
they urge him to pray for forgiveness and mercy. Their stance is
just as rational (perhaps more so); the difference exists in that
theirs is projected with the warmth of compassion and a belief in a
merciful God who "will throw down to hell/And yet call back again
from thence" (V.iii.1810-11); whereas the mind of Philologus in its
cold logic is able to perceive only a wrathful God bent on exacting
a vengeance which will measure the culpability entailed in Philologus's
deliberate choice of worldly rather than eternal joy. Philologus's
arguments are expressive of an intellect which is fated to come between
him and any understanding of a merciful God. His name which means
"lover-of-words" emphasizes this, but it also stresses his failure to
practise what he preaches to others, and the warning he makes to his
sons:

But this I say, that of vain faith alone you should not prate,
But also by your holy life you should your faith express.

(V.iii.1931-32)

57. *The Sermons of John Donne*, Vol.11, eds. Evelyn M. Simpson and
George R. Potter (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1954),
pp. 361, 363. However, George notes that "Donne...actually
departed more decisively from Calvinist predestinarianism than
any other English divine." See George, p. 71.

These two ways of interpreting the meaning of his name demonstrate only one instance where a double focus is provided in the play. The transformation of the glass of vanities into "the glass of deadly desperation" (V.ii.1719-20) and the "false illusion" which Theologus attributes to Philologus's corruption of mind (V.iii.1894) contribute to this sense of double vision throughout the play. It is interesting to note that the convincing argument of Theologus regarding Christ's forgiveness of Peter (V.ii.1782-88) is foreshadowed by the very same argument from Suggestion (IV.iii.1635), where it lacks integrity. Again Spirit speaks of two kinds of sin, the one committed through frailty, the other consciously consented to (IV.ii.33-35), and it is this very deliberate consent, not unopposed by Spirit and Conscience, which provides the protagonist's dilemma; and Woodes is most concerned to project this in his play. It is Philologus's belated awareness of the degree of his culpability which precipitates this dilemma and produces the opposing arguments of Theologus and Eusebius on the one hand, and Philologus, on the other. A merciful interpretation of God's attitude to repentant sinners culminating in salvation is reminiscent of the early moralities, but Philologus's precise awareness of the enormity of his sin, and his inability to forgive himself, debar him from mercy and salvation, and the meticulous scrutiny of the Calvinist doctrine highlights and intensifies his tragic impasse. It is this merciless focussing on deliberately chosen evil which creates the hero's second fatal conflict of conscience, and which promotes a very different concept of man from that of the *imago dei* idea of medieval and early morality plays. The change in man's image is caused not only by sin but because he is seen as irredeemable; no longer created in God's image and destined for eternal life, his new image may be deduced from the words of Horror which also isolate Philologus's

particular sin:

Thus have I caught thee in thy pride and brought thee to
damnation,
So that thou art a pattern true of God's just indignation,
Whereby each man may warned be, the like sins to eschew,
Lest the same torments they incur which in thee they shall
view.

(V.ii.1722-25)

Here man is no longer necessarily seen as capable of glorification.

The possibility of damnation is very real, and such a man is an
example of a wrathful God and a warning to others. Hence man's capa-

city for sin rather than sanctification is stressed. It is certainly
the case that the attitude to evil of the dramatists under consideration
undergoes a noticeable

change with the swing from redemption to reprobation that occurs in

these later plays where Protestant theology is so clearly influenced
by Calvinism.⁵⁸ The Calvinist predilection for focussing on the
damnation rather than the salvation of sinning man has much to do with
the intensity with which sin is portrayed in this play and everything
to do with the abandonment and despair which Philologus experiences.
If one is to be as coldly and consistently logical as the strict
Calvinist could be, there is a sense in which Philologus's despair
and suicide can only be viewed as morally neutral, since it could be
argued that he is predestined for damnation. If we adhere to this
consistency we must also question whether the warnings of Spirit and
Conscience could have any real effect. However, the second redemptive
ending as well as the viewpoint argued by Theologus and Eusebius
suggest that salvation is always a possibility, in which case the
admonitions of Spirit and Conscience could have been effective. In

58. See George, pp. 70-71:

... The English pulpit has on the whole exhibited
remarkable consistency. It has shown itself to be
indubitably Protestant and, except for some tendency
to retreat from the extremes of predestinarian ideology,
essentially Calvinist in viewpoint.

the light of this interpretation Philologus's certainty of his own ability to gauge God's judgment exhibits an intellectual pride which is, to say the least, culpable.

Hence the double focus, of which I have spoken, is most important in its projection of the culpability entailed in the sins of Philologus and the two concepts of an adjudicating God. The element of questioning and doubt which is the inevitable result is highlighted rather than resolved by the different conclusions which Woodes provides, especially as the tragic ending has greater dramatic appeal since it seems to be the inevitable outcome of Philologus's despair. Gone is the reassurance of the medieval and early Morality play which confidently preached that man was born to be saved and that God was merciful to sinners. Perhaps it is not too suppositional to suggest that the agnosticism and cynicism of later plays, such as those of Webster, may have been partly due to the Calvinism which seems to have made Philologus and Faustus think that they were beyond salvation.

The plays in this section, whilst all Moralities, touch on several issues. Although they articulate the religious evils of the Reformation and the post-Reformation era, Bale's plays refer to political issues also, particularly in relation to England's sovereignty. As this issue was inextricably commingled with the religious problem, it is not at all surprising that this should be so, but that the religious problem has a political aspect is an indication that there will be a movement away from a preoccupation with religious matters in the drama of the future. *Respublica* is unique in that it manages to convert all its moral exhortations into the political theme of good government.

Although the nature of evil depicted by Bale is Roman theology

rather than man's conduct, man's behaviour is still important since it is he who must choose between the evil and the good, and this is particularly the case in *The Conflict of Conscience*. Most of the polemical religious plays turn the focus back to man, but the emphasis is switched to man's behaviour in this world. His life in this world must accord with scriptural teachings. The Morality tradition has not been to internalize the conflict that man experiences in making his choices. The complexity of his make-up has been transposed into visual abstractions, so that his vices and his virtues occupy the stage, and manipulate, threaten and persuade him. However in *The Conflict of Conscience*, the audience is able to sense the suffering entailed in the protagonist's agonies of conscience and remorse, because these facets of his composition are presented more as a part of him. Spirit, Conscience, Horror and Despair are really the externalized voices of his inner self as are the counsellors of Faustus. Philologus and his companions therefore become more fully realizable as human beings with opinions, emotions and conflicts of their own. The words they speak are, accordingly, more charged with emotion, and the roles themselves must also call for a more comprehensive style of acting. This is the case because of the tragic situation which is being enacted rather than because of the quality of the drama itself. Even so the drama has now taken important steps towards the great tragic dramas of the future. Certainly the Vices do appear on the stage, but they are recognizable as members of the Catholic Church. Importantly Woodes has them absent altogether during the last tragic conflict, so that the entire attention of the audience may be concentrated on the torments of Philologus. In *King Johan*, which

lacks the tragic appeal possessed by *The Conflict of Conscience*, the vices at times actually merge into quasi-historical figures.

CHAPTER III

TYRANTS AND REVENGE

Justice is fled to heaven, and comes no nearer.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore. 111.ix.64.

In this chapter I will discuss plays where the dramatists are less homiletic in their attitude to evil, and more adept at projecting the evils they are concerned with in a manner which takes full advantage of the theatre's potential for spectacular and often grisly effects. The evils depicted are those of tyranny and revenge, evils which of their very nature entail associated evils such as lust, unlawful ambition and murder. While it is true to say that all evil has the power to generate further wickedness, the evil in the following plays has a tendency to produce a mounting ferocity of crimes, and for the most part, these crimes are presented on stage and in such grim detail that an audience is confronted by a surfeit of horror and cruelty. These sensational spectacles seem nonetheless to underscore the moral problem involved. This problem can be identified in a general way, by seeing it as related to the dangers of uncontrolled passion. With the growing tendency in Renaissance humanism to accentuate man's ability to make responsible decisions, it was important that such decisions should be made, not in the heat of passion, but in the coolness of reason. In the case of revenge, the problem can be defined more precisely if one considers the dangerous repercussions inherent in retaliation even if such an action would appear to be justifiable, because active pursuit of vengeance too often took on the proportions of a vendetta.

Yet it would seem that didacticism, of the kind apparent in

the morality play, was beginning to lose its interest for the dramatist, and, one may assume, the audience also. The drama could still have an edifying effect upon an audience, but one can sense a new adventurousness in the dramatist and a more naturalistic approach. He was, after all, competing with his fellow-playwrights in the search for material that might entertain and stimulate the interests and growing demands of an audience which demonstrated a particular enthusiasm for plays like *Cambises*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*.¹ Such a development is apparent when one considers the disparateness of the literary and ethical backgrounds and concerns of *Aprius and Virginia* (1559-68), *Cambises* (1558-67), *Horestes* (1567), and *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92), compared to plays like *Enough is as Good as a Feast* (1560-69), *All for Money* (1559-77), *The Longer Thou Livest* (1560-68), *Like Will to Like* (1562-68), *Trial of Treasure* (1567), and *The Conflict of Conscience* (1575-81). *The Spanish Tragedy* is the most Senecan of the plays discussed in this chapter, and as well as dealing with revenge, it has the distinction of possibly portraying the first of those characters in Elizabethan drama who were to become known as Machiavellian villains. However, my discussion will focus first on the tyrant plays, beginning with *Aprius and Virginia*.

1. Kenneth Muir notes:

Titus Andronicus was immensely popular in the sixteenth century and Ben Jonson, followed by later critics, regarded this as a proof of the shocking taste of Elizabethan audiences.... the play is so horrific that they would gladly transfer the responsibility to some other dramatist. Could Shakespeare, they asked, at any stage of his career have perpetrated this *grand guignol* melodrama of rape, mutilation, murder and cannibalism?

See Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p. 20.

*Apus and Virginia*² is scarcely a literary gem. Indeed Farnham calls it "utterly uncouth and undistinguished in poetic execution". He goes on, however, to pay due respect to its structure and its treatment of Chaucer's "Phisiciens Tale", which was probably its direct source, although the plot derives originally from Livy.³ The human evildoer is a judge, Apus, whose lustful passion for the chaste Virginia causes him to degenerate into a Senecan-type tyrant. His swift decline is encouraged by the Vice, Haphazard. The full force of Apus's evil can be gauged when it is measured against the opening scene which presents a paradigm of family fidelity and virtue. The chaste Virginia has been reared by her parents, Virginius and Mater, to follow this model of family perfection. The sense of order and control that this scene projects is rudely shaken, not only by Apus's lust which will eventually desecrate and destroy it, but also by the lack of world order, moral or natural, which is implied in the juxtaposed scene which introduces Haphazard. To a certain degree this Vice figure resembles Fortune in his "Sometime I advance them, Sometime I destroy" (l. 194), but in the classical or medieval world, Fortune was conceived against a background of the deity, either pagan or Christian, so that a sense of world order was preserved in spite of the vagaries of Fortune herself. The main feature of Haphazard's world, however, is its total lack of pattern or predictability. Everything is a matter of "hap" or "hazard". Haphazard counsels Apus:

2. *Tudor Interludes*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 271-317. All references to the text of the play are from this edition. The author is denoted as "R.B." It is thought that he may have been Richard Bower. See Bevington, p. 32. The dates given for this play are those quoted in Houle's *The English Morality and Related Drama*, p.8. However, Farnham states that the play was entered in 1567-68 and printed in 1575. See Farnham, p. 251.

3. See Farnham, p. 251.

. . . be you not a frayde,
 And so you may happen to hazard the mayde.
 It is but in Hazard, and may come by hap,
 Win her, or lose her, trie you the trap.

(ll. 544-47)

Haphazard sets out to destroy the classical model of world order, which *Apus and Virginia* depicts, in the same way that the Vice of the religious Moralities plots to destroy the Christian concept of world order. Farnham makes an interesting observation regarding the way in which Chaucer's introduction of the evil impulse in the judge foreshadows the conventional Morality method of doing so, referring to the following lines of the "Phisiciens Tale":

Anon the feend in-to his herte ran,
 And taughte him sodeynly, that he by slighthe
 The mayden to his purpos winne mighte.⁴

The pattern of increasing ferocity to which I have already referred is apparent in *Apus and Virginia*. At first Apus experiences a powerful passion but he is not unaware of the reality of the circumstances: "Oh that my yeeres were youthfull yet, or that I were unwedded!" (l. 383). When Haphazard suggests a fraudulent method by which Virginia might be taken from her family, Apus is halted by his conscience, but his pause is only momentary (ll. 429-36). When Conscience and Justice speak for themselves at greater length they are not a part of Apus's inner conflict. They speak to demonstrate the destructive effect that the judge's choice has had upon his better nature. Apus is soon speaking like the Vice: "... then hap as hap shall hit..." (l. 450), and he adds callously:

Let Conscience grope, and Iudgement crave, I wil not shrink
 one whit.
 I will persever in my thought, I will deflower hir youth,
 I will not sure reverted be; my hart shall have no ruth.

(ll. 451-53)

4. Farnham, p. 255.

Thus Apius's choice is shown as deliberate. He is not Haphazard's dupe as many Morality heroes are the victims of the Vice. He merely lacks the *modus operandi* and, when Haphazard supplies this, the full force of his tyrannical lust is unleashed. This is evident in the passion of his speech: "I King, and I Keyser, I rule and overwhealme;/ I do what it please me... (ll. 411-12).

Apius is speaking even more ruthlessly at the beginning of the scene in which Virginius enters in order to present his daughter's severed head to the judge:

I will have Virginia, I will hir defloure,
Els rigorous sword hir hart shall devoure.

(ll. 860-61)

When he sees Virginius, Apius recoils in horror and reverts to his former judicial role and calls on the services of Justice and Reward to punish this "carl unnaturall". Yet it is clearly Apius's lust and tyrannical demands that have brought about Virginius's bloody act, and while Apius has been proclaiming his will, the audience has witnessed the pathetic scene between father and daughter where, on her knees, Virginia has entreated her father to "graunt me the death" (l. 799). The forceful cruelty of Apius's speech right up to this horrendous climax is dramatically united with the horrifying sight of Virginia's head and the "bloudy deede" which caused it, in order to emphasize the criminality of the judge. Thus the terrifying repercussions of the evil of tyrannical lust are conveyed to the audience through the grim spectacle of this scene which would have been enacted with as much semblance to the gory reality as was possible.⁵

5. See M.C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935), p. 18. Bradbrook says:

A great deal of painstaking and elaborate work went to the staging of atrocities. The realism of the mutilations was helped by bladders of red ink and the use of animal's blood.

The final violence of the play is wrought upon Apius by himself when, in despair, he commits suicide while awaiting the fulfilment of his sentence of "deadly death" which has been passed upon him by Reward. It is fitting that this act should take place off-stage so that the grisly effect of the climactic scene is not diminished in any way. In conventional Morality style the moral of Apius's act is pronounced as the "finall end of fleshly lust" (l. 1007).

Although I have been discussing *Apius and Virginia* as a tyrant play, I would suggest that the revenge motif is not entirely absent. Apius introduces the idea when he calls for "vengeance straight" on all those "that will not aide my case" (ll. 537-39). But it may be seen more strikingly when Virginia requests her father to kill her and to convey her severed head to Apius.⁶ Having decapitated his daughter, Virginius is aware of the enormity of his deed and contemplates suicide, when Comfort urges him to take the grisly gift to Apius "in recompence of lechors lust" (l. 848). While this may be seen as part of the retribution that comes upon Apius, it also seems to imply revenge. The difficulty with both concepts is that one may entail the other. However, retribution has a more legalized and impersonal connotation than revenge, and, in *Apius and Virigina*, Justice and Reward would seem to act as agents of retribution in the dénouement, where punishment is meted out in the Morality fashion. This includes the hanging of the Vice, Haphazard, so that the Vice's chaotic world view is finally proved to be illusory. As opposed to the idea of impartiality inherent in retribution, revenge seems to infer a personal concern on the part of the avenger to inflict

6. Compare *Thyestes*, V.iii, and *Titus Andronicus*, 111.i.234. In Shakespeare's play there is an actual reference to Virginius's decapitation of his daughter, but it is attributed to the deflowering of Virginia rather than as a means to avoid it.

suffering equal to, if not exceeding, that endured by the victim. The words "in recompence of lechour gaine" with which Virginia's head is presented to Apius implies such a concern to match the crime with the punishment. In addition the gory spectacle of the climactic scene seems to suggest the revenge play in the language that Virginius uses when offering his grim gift:

Ah wicked Iudge, the virgin chaste
Hath sent her beutious face
In recompence of lechour gaine
.
She bids thee imbrue thy bloody handes
And filthy lecherous minde....

(ll. 883-88)

Thus a fusion of morality and classical literary conventions is used to effect the tyrant's punishment and to restore order to the world of the play. The co-existence of these conventions is indeed a sign that the play is transitional.⁷ This may also be observed of the way in which Apius's inner conflict is staged. Conscience and Justice do not speak for themselves at first, but Apius asks: "how am I devided?" (l. 429), and it is he who reports his inner struggle between good and evil. This feeling of a divided self is an early foreshadowing of what Cruttwell speaks of as occurring in plays of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁸

Happé thinks that the tyrant figure of the judge, Apius, is "reminiscent in his speech of Herod and Caiaphas in the Mystery Cycles". He also sees a parallel between the tragic course of action chosen by Virginius and his daughter and that of Abraham in the Mystery Plays.⁹ This may well be so, or partly so, but I tend to

7. See Spivack, p. 253.

8. Patrick Cruttwell, *The Shakespearean Moment* (New York: Random, 1960), pp. 23-24. Farnham also comments on the "modern" aspect of this scene. See Farnham, pp. 255-56.

9. Peter Happé, "Tragic Themes in Three Tudor Moralities", *Studies in English Literature*, V, (1965), 220.

agree more with Spivack's comment:

Here, for the first time in these hybrid plays, we are taken outside the Bible.... [Apus and Virginia] is very clearly influenced by the Senecan drama, and its atmosphere is Renaissance-classical rather than Christian.¹⁰

Although Spivack's comment does not necessarily exclude Happé's view, the death chosen by Virginia suggests classical rather than Christian morality. Apart from the two instances of Christian eschatology that are mentioned by Spivack (l. 436; l. 909), the stress is on the pagan deity, and classical allusions replace the biblical references of the religious Moralities. Again, the secular emphasis is underlined when Doctrina, Fame and Memory announce, at the end of the play, that Virginia's reward will be the shining example she will set to others and her unblemished reputation "within the mouth and minde of man from age to age againe" (l. 1016).

In *Apus and Virginia* the dramatist has been concerned to depict the fall of an historical figure due to the destructive power of uncontrolled and all-consuming passion, which has caused the death of an innocent victim and the abuse of his own office and trust. Poised against these evils are the edifying example of the heroine's virginity and the courageous and tragic manner in which she preserves it. The emphasis of the play is classical and secular, and its climax sets out to condemn the major evil by highlighting it within the gory effects of a Senecan drama. As this play appears to have been contemporaneous with *Enough is as Good as a Feast* it demonstrates the variety of the drama at one particular time. However there are technical similarities as the play still depends on Morality conventions to achieve its just dénouement, and some good and evil forces are represented by abstractions, the most notable of which is, of

10. Spivack, p. 269.

course, the Vice-figure himself.

Cambises (1558-69) by Thomas Preston¹¹ is more remarkable for the multiplication of its villainous crimes than *Apus and Virginia*. The cumulative effect of these evils is intensified by Preston's style of presenting each crime in swift succession. The Vice, Ambidexter, comprehensively summarizes Cambises' tyrannical career:

Cambises put a judge to death, that was a good deed,
But to kil the yung childe was worse to proceed,
To murder his brother and then his owne wife....

(ll. 1149-51)

But such a summary omits the gory details pertaining to each crime and even to the "good deed", and such details serve to condemn the extent of Cambises' cruelty and sheer lust for blood.

Apart from his villainy, Cambises is renowned for the one "good deed", his punishment of the corrupt Sisamnes, whom he had appointed to rule in his absence with the caution "if you therein offend ... correction shall extend" (ll. 93-94). Sisamnes proves to be a corrupt and unjust administrator, and so he may be seen to merit his punishment of death. But close examination of the manner of his punishment reflects the extreme nature of Cambises' sense of a fitting penalty. When Sisamnes has been slain, Cambises orders: "Pul his skin over his eares to make his death more vile" (l. 464). This mutilation of Sisamnes' corpse seems to point to a sadistic pleasure in the extremes of cruelty. The pitiful lamentations of Sisamnes' son, Otian, would seem excessive in view of his father's culpability especially as it is not only the flaying of his father to which he objects, unless they are meant to highlight, dramatically, the inhumanity of the whole spectacle, although, doubtless, with its realistic

11. *Tudor Plays*, ed. Edmund Creeth (New York: Anchor, 1966), pp. 443-503. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

stage direction, the scene would have thrilled those in an audience with a taste for *grand guignol* theatre. What is more, Shame has already warned of Cambises' cruelties before the slaying of Sisamnes:

The odious facts and shameless deeds that Cambises
king dooth use.
All pietie and vertuose life, he dooth it clene
refuse.
Lechery and drunkennes, he dooth it much frequent.

(ll. 343-45)

Creeth refers to this entrance of Shame as premature, citing it as evidence of "Preston's inadequacy to his task", since it comes before Cambises' one "good deed".¹² Spivack says that Preston "offers the contrast of Cambises good with Cambises bad", and goes on to observe that "after this meritorious act the evil in Cambises' nature asserts itself. He becomes addicted to drink...."¹³ Has Preston made a mistake in allowing Shame to report Cambises' "shameless deeds" before this "meritorious act"? Farnham quotes from Richard Taverner's book, *The Garden of Wysdom* from which it is thought that Preston derived his material for the play: "'Cambyses Kynge of Persia was otherwyse a verye wycked and cruell tyraunte. Yet there is no prynce of so desperat an hope of so naughtye a lyfe, but that at the lest waye other whyles doth some honest acte.'"¹⁴ Surely then Preston is merely putting forward Taverner's idea that no man is so evil that he is incapable of one good deed. Apart from Shame's proclamation there are other reasons to suspect that Cambises has perpetrated evil deeds to which the audience has not been witness and that he is also addicted to drink from the start. At the beginning of the play, Councill advises the king to "Extinguish vice, and in that cup have no delight"

12. Creeth in the Introduction to this edition of the play, p. xli.

13. Spivack, p. 284.

14. Farnham, p. 264.

(ℓ. 33). Again, when Cambises seeks Praxaspes' approval of his slaying of the corrupt judge, he receives the reply:

But...
The vice of drunkennes (Oh king) which doth
you sore infect
With other great abuses....

(ℓℓ. 479-81)

Clearly there are too many such references to the king's failings for them to be dismissed as the result of Preston's inadequacies.¹⁵ It would even seem possible to judge Cambises' execution of Sisamnes as accidentally good in that it is a part of the king's usual retaliation against anyone who crosses him, be it for good or ill. Such an interpretation gains weight when Ambidexter's words comparing Cambises with Bishop Bonner are examined:

For both their delights was to shed blood,
But never intended to doo any good.

(ℓℓ. 1147-48)

The three great abuses of the play swiftly succeed each other. First, Cambises slays Praxaspes' son in order to avenge his counselor's words and to prove "whether that I a sober king or els a drunkard bee" (ℓ. 508). While the child is being fetched, he orders wine and still more wine, for which he expresses an insatiate appetite. It is important to note that he has not been drinking when the idea to shoot an arrow into the child's heart occurs to him. He is fully aware of the nature of his demand. He acknowledges that Praxaspes "doost delight" in his "blisful babe", and demonstrates

15. I am aware of Armstrong's argument in relation to the interpretation of all aspects of Cambises' one good deed, and acknowledge its apparent soundness, if one overlooks parts of the text of the play and attributes them to inadequacy on the part of Preston. Moreover, Armstrong's argument neglects Ambidexter's statement about Cambises (ℓℓ. 607-09), which I will discuss in due course. See W.A. Armstrong, "The Authorship and Political Meaning of *Cambises*", *English Studies*, 36 (1955), 289-99.

his inflexible determination of will: "There is no way, I tel thee plain, but I wil doo this deed" (ℓ. 516). The additional barbarism indulged in by Cambises when he orders the child's heart to be cut out, so that he can offer it to the father with the arrow transfixing it, is reminiscent of the flaying of Sisamnes. That he should call his marksmanship a "valiant thing" (ℓ. 566) is in keeping with the feeling of righteousness that he expresses after his method of dispatching the corrupt judge. Preston is indeed presenting a tyrant with such a precise command of the many features of cruelty that we can experience no sympathy for him, as he arrogantly pursues his bloody course through life "blind to the vengeance of God which awaits him".¹⁶ The pitiful scene wherein mother and father bewail their loss and remove their child's body from the stage reinforces such a reaction, and intensifies the sense of helplessness and powerlessness which is common to all of Cambises' victims.

The other victims are his virtuous brother, Smirdis, and the queen. The Vice, Ambidexter, motivates Cambises against his brother for no reason other than that it is his nature to deal with both hands. The introduction of Ambidexter here seems somewhat superfluous, as Preston has built such an expectation of Cambises by now, that his eventual *volte face* in regard to his brother, to whom he has shown affection, is to be expected. Preston then depicts Venus as the direct cause of the king's sudden obsession with his first cousin. Venus's entrance in a play featuring the Vice seems incongruous, but she has an important part to play in effecting Cambises' downfall. She bids the blind Cupid "force this game of mine" (ℓ. 844), and the audience learns that part of this game is that Cambises should pursue his

16. J.M.R. Margeson, *The Origins of English Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 54.

cousin against the "course" of nature. With interference from the gods Cambises' future seems ominous. When Cambises tells his cousin that his intention is to marry her, she cautions him, thus adding a further note of foreboding, because a marriage that is against "Natures course ... would the gods displease of all that is the worst" (ll. 910-11). Cambises' retort is predictable:

Who dare say nay that I pretend, who dare the same
withstand,
Shall lose his hed and have reporte as traitor
through my land.

(ll. 920-21)

Despite the king's earlier regard for his queen, she soon follows the fate of Smirdis, when she dares to make an unfavourable comparison of the affection between two brother whelps with that of Cambises for his brother. Cambises' wrath explodes: "O cursed caitive, vicious, vile!" (l. 1040), and he orders her death, indifferent to the pleas of his court. Ambidexter then comes onto the stage recalling the past deeds of the king, and wagers that Cambises will "dye by some wound./He hath shed so much blood that his wil be shed" (ll. 1154-55). Cambises enters immediately "without a gown, a sword thrust up into his side, bleeding". As he dies, he gasps out: "A just reward for my misdeeds my death dooth plain declare" (l. 1170). These words are clearly not characteristic of the wilful tyrant and I do not think that Cambises "undergoes a conventional repentance".¹⁷ The form is conventional enough, but Preston is utilising this form as a device to align the moral more sharply with the act. The king's words recall the moral in the prologue and are soon echoed by the lords after his death. There seems to be no doubt of Preston's intentions regarding the fate of the ranting tyrant. Farnham sums them up when he says

17. M.M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty* (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 77.

that the dramatist "condemns Cambises unhesitatingly to the justice that his career of crime in this world merits".¹⁸

Cambises' crimes exceed those of Apius in both number and kind. Both are given to ranting tirades, but Cambises is not beset by lust in the way that Apius is, but by sheer arrogance of will. This is not to infer that both tyrants do not share in each of these sins, but rather that the emphasis of the plays tends to place the order of predominating evils in such a way that lust motivates Apius, and brutal force of will, Cambises, and that all associated evils fall into place beneath these cardinal sins. Cambises is so ruled by an obsession to enforce his will that he will not listen to advice or criticism from counsellor, brother or wife. His apparent regard for Councill's advice in the opening scene has doubts cast upon it by Ambidexter's claim that his "professed vertue" may have been feigned (ℓ. 608) and by the repeated warnings against drunkenness (ℓℓ. 33; 479-81). Drunkenness is referred to frequently as one of his flaws, but the episode concerning Praxaspes' son demonstrates that this is not the cause of his wickedness, although, doubtless, it accelerates his degeneration. Moreover, he exhibits a sadistic pleasure in cruelty that is only too spectacularly realized.

The moral and political lesson of the play is more comprehensive than it is in *Apius and Virginia*. I agree with Armstrong that a contemporary audience might have deduced a political moral from the play which preached obedience to an evil tyrant whom God would eventually punish for his crimes.¹⁹ There is, however, more emphasis on retribution than passive obedience because, whether intentionally or not, Preston has so structured his play that the act of retribution

18. Farnham, p. 269.

19. Armstrong, p. 298.

is anticipated throughout the play, heightened by the appearance of Venus, and highlighted by its enactment in the climactic scene. Very strong in the play is the prescription that a ruler must seek and follow good advice.

The traces of Morality convention still apparent in *Apus and Virginia* are swiftly disappearing in *Cambises*. Apart from the Vice figure, it is true that neither play gives important roles to the abstractions, and in *Cambises* they may be seen as definite types such as those to be encountered in the later history plays. Importantly, there are no personified virtues to pronounce punishment upon Cambises as there are in *Apus and Virginia*. Bevington sees an unsatisfactory moral ambiguity in the death of the tyrant because it "is sudden and accidental... and its moral function is underplayed. The retribution does not compensate sufficiently for the grossness of the crimes."²⁰ Certainly the suddenness and the brevity of the scene with all its implications is unsatisfactory from a dramatic point of view, although the gory details accompanying the king's appearance together with the accumulation of such effects throughout the play apparently satisfied the demands of the audience for spectacular theatre.²¹ Perhaps some of the ambiguity is attributable to the dramatist's concern to present grisly spectacle rather than well-structured drama. On the other hand, it should be noted that Preston prepares the audience for this scene of retribution when he introduces Venus. In this respect, it is interesting to observe the rationale for the active interference of the gods. Venus prepares a well-timed assault upon Cambises in order that he will react with such a degree of culpability that his sin will constitute the ultimate

20. Bevington, p. 214.

21. See Spivack, p. 285.

offence against the gods. Presumably his earlier crimes succeeded only in attracting the attention of the gods, and they must ensnare him into committing the maximal insult against the deity before he merits their direct intervention.

In *Cambises* the Vice, Ambidexter, has begun to play a different role to that of the key-Vice figure to which we have become accustomed. He even makes important moral comments, not in the style of Hypocrisy in *The Conflict of Conscience*, where the aim is a satirical thrust against Catholicism,²² but in the form of recognizably responsible comment on the actions of Cambises. No longer has the name of the Vice - Ambidexter - a moral connotation in the way that Avarice has in *Respublica*, for example. Instead his title explains his role as well as his nature - "his dexterity in deceit" - as well as the evil.²³ He is more identifiable in the Vice's old role as the tempter of Sisamnes, who displays an inclination to abuse the trust placed in him in any case. As Creeth points out there is a "primitive attempt" to convey Sisamnes' moral conflict (ll. 120-25),²⁴ but his doubts seem to be grounded on the fear of discovery rather than on any moral convictions:

What abundance of welth to me might I get!
Now and then some vantage I atchive, much more
yet may I take,
But that I fear unto the king that some complaint
wil make.

(ll. 308-10)

Hence, Ambidexter's advice to make the best of "time while ye may"

22. Preston does show some affinity with the anti-Catholic polemical plays when Ambidexter likens Cambises to Bishop Bonner (l. 1146). This is Ambidexter in his more conventional role of Vice. See further comments in this regard within the body of this thesis.

23. Spivack, p. 291.

24. See "Notes: *Cambises*", p. 557.

and to "play with bothe hands" falls on very fertile ground indeed.

Ambidexter's natural ability to "play with bothe hands" is not only demonstrated in his double-dealing with Cambises and his brother, Smirdis, but also in the sort of role he fulfils within the play. As an accurate moral commentator he sees that both Sisamnes and Cambises have his own gift of two-faced behaviour. Concerning them both, he tells the audience:

How like you Sisamnes for using of me?
 He plaid with bothe hands ...
 The king himself was godly up trained.
 He professed vertue, but I think it was fained.
 He plays with bothe hands, good deeds and il.

(ll. 605-09)

When Ambidexter provokes trouble between Smirdis and Cambises he is quick to point out what really motivates Cambises:

In spight, because his brother should never be king,
 His hart, being wicked, consented to this thing.

(ll. 750-51)

But in addition to this moral role, Ambidexter also personifies the inner capacity of man to be double-dealing in the same way that the conventional Morality Vice figure demonstrated the specific faults within man which his name signified. He announces himself in the same manner:

My name is Ambidexter. I signifie one
 That with bothe hands finely can play,
 Now with king Cambises ...

For [a] while I meane with a souldier to be,
 Then give I a leape to Sisamnes the judge.

To all kinde of estates I meane for to trudge.

(ll. 149-56)

The evil he represents is a sort of "moral ambidexterity" which can be found in men from all classes of society.²⁵ However, particular

25. Spivack, pp. 288-91.

emphasis is placed on the opportunities that men in high office have for the exercise of this sort of behaviour, and in his role of critic, Ambidexter is able to hold this evil up for inspection.

In spite of the play's shortcomings, Preston may be seen to be examining the role of ruler in some depth; a depth which exceeds that of Skelton's and Bale's attempts and foreshadows the interest that such an undertaking is to have for Shakespeare. He does this through the Vice, Ambidexter, and achieves quite a successful penetration - not of the potential of power to corrupt - but of the potential within man to be duplicitous, which, when aligned with power, has particularly dangerous implications. It is here that the upright counsellor has a most important role to play, and in order that he might be effective in that role, it is essential that the ruler should be prepared to bend his will and to seek and follow advice. Arrogance of will is portrayed as the besetting sin of the tyrant, and may be understood as a potential danger for any man in command.

This same arrogance is not entirely absent from the protagonist of John Pikeryng's play *Horestes* (1567).²⁶ Although this is a play primarily about revenge, and is apparently the first English drama to focus on this evil,²⁷ criticism of the play tends to overlook the insistence of Pikeryng early in *Horestes* that his hero is determined to have his own will to avenge his father's death. The Vice, from

26. *Illustrations of Old English Literature*, Vol. 22, ed. J. Payne Collier (London: 1886, reissued New York: Benjamin Blom 1966). All references to the text of this play are from this edition. The pagination in this volume is not continuous. Each work has its own numbering, and only the text of *Horestes* (not its title page) is numbered from 1-51.

27. See A.P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London: Hutchinson's Univ. Press, 1950), p. 156.

whom the audience is by now accustomed to hearing of the obscurities of man's motives, exclaims:

. . . I tell you of truth
 In revenging the wronge his mynd he hath set.
 It is not Idumeus that hath power to let
 Horestes from sekinge his mother to kyll.
 . . . hele have his own wyll.

(p. 10)

With the Vice's words Pikeryng injects a moral tension into the play. Horestes' desire to avenge Agamemnon's death is, in the circumstances, a natural filial reaction. What Nature and Menelaus insist on is the unnaturalness of his desire to kill his mother, but this aside for the moment, the question that Pikeryng prompts us to ask is whether Horestes is concerned with the more personal aspect of effecting his own desire for blood-vengeance rather than with the wider concept of promoting a just retribution against his father's murderers. When Idumeus agrees that Horestes is right to pursue his course of revenge, the Vice again comments that Horestes "joyse that he must war begin" (p. 12). The sort of character sketch that the dramatist has drawn of his protagonist in such references is underlined with a flourish when Horestes and his men amass before the gates of Clytemnestra's city. A herald is sent to advise those within to yield as Horestes warns: "Unlesse they yeld I will destroye both man, woman & childe" (p. 28). Horestes' words closely follow those of the Vice: "I spare no wight.../But with this blade I wyll them kyll" (p. 27), and since the Vice has just revealed himself as Revenge, the very worst aspects of that passion are located not only in Revenge, the Vice, but also in Horestes, the vengeance-seeker. The arrogance of Horestes' words and the ruthlessness of the war he wages are reminiscent of the behaviour of the tyrants in the former two plays, even though he may not equal their rigour. In fact Menelaus makes just

such an accusation before the council of kings when he recounts Horestes' conduct in the war against Clytemnestra's stronghold:

The fatherles he pyttied not where as he ever went,
 The agyd wight whose yeres before their youthly poure
 had spent,
 The mayd whose parentes at the sege, defending of their
 right,
 Was slaine, the same this tyrant hath opressyd throuh his
 might....

(pp. 41-42)

It is interesting that when Menelaus asks for vengeance against Horestes, he seeks for Horestes' exile, not his death. When Menelaus is informed of Horestes' reasons for killing Egistus and Clytemnestra, he himself admits:

. . . I must confesse that I revengyd should
 have be,
 . . .
 But yet I would, for Natures sake, have spard my mothers
 lyfe.

(p. 43)

Menelaus's argument echoes that of Nature who cautions Horestes before he sets in motion his plan for vengeance. On the other hand, Idumeus, who sanctions Horestes' vengeance-seeking takes a very different attitude, seeing the pending war in an aura of medieval glory, and Horestes as a "manley knight" (p. 12).²⁸

De Chickera states that the argument that God alone can seek vengeance does not hold in this play, since it was also allowed that God could choose his instrument for punishment.²⁹ This, he argues, is the reason why Horestes asks for Idumeus's consent, for according

28. Pikeryng's main source for his play is thought to be Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. Hence the medieval atmosphere with which Idumeus invests the war may be readily understood. See Farnham, p. 259.

29. E.B. de Chickera, "Horestes' Revenge - Another Interpretation", *Notes and Queries*, 6 (1959), 190.

to Elizabethan teaching, the king was God's agent. Hence the king's sanction legalizes Horestes' act. I do not think that the problem concerning the justification of Horestes' revenge can be resolved so easily. Pikeryng demonstrates, and even accentuates, the equivocal aspects of Horestes' behaviour not only in the scenes I have mentioned but also through the Vice's action of pretending to act as a consenting messenger of the gods.³⁰ De Chickera would maintain that Idumeus's approval compensates for the deceit of the Vice, but the doubt injected by the Vice's trickery still remains. More importantly, Menelaus's reaction is a thorough and potent moral comment, because it allows a degree of righteous retaliation for Agamemnon's murder, posits an alternative way of dealing with Clytemnestra's wickedness, such as the exile he proposes for Horestes, and condemns the ravages of Horestes' war, which deprives the innocent of life as well as the guilty. In fact it is possible to see Menelaus as representing a sort of moral yardstick in estimating the degree of legitimacy in Horestes' actions.

The apparent approval of the hero's revenge with which the play ends, and with which Menelaus concurs, more from a need for harmony than from any great moral conviction, does not, in my view, alter the ambiguity which the dramatist creates in his early portrayal of Horestes' motives for revenge and his actions in seeking it. In this respect Farnham's remarks are most apposite:

It is manifest that Pickering sets out with some care to make the revenge of Horestes an evil course of action and Horestes an unwitting sinner, blinded as so many protagonists in the moralities are blinded with the conviction that evil is not evil but good.³¹

30. As Farnham points out, Caxton does not allow for any questioning of the validity of the gods' commands. See Farnham, p. 262.

31. Farnham, p. 261.

Horestes' own defence of his actions before the council of kings (p. 42) may seem reasonable if they are taken at their face value, but when one examines the exact details of his conduct up to the enactment of his revenge, one can see that the circumstances were not quite the way that Horestes recounts them. It is a good attempt at self-justification, and it succeeds. Menelaus, who has been the one to charge Horestes with the unnatural slaying of his mother, is persuaded to present him with his reward - the hand of his daughter in marriage. The play ends with the emphasis on political harmony.

Phillips has argued for a very interesting manner in which the play may be understood. He suggests that Pikeryng has manipulated his source material so that it might be seen to reflect the political occurrences in Scotland in 1567, when Lord Darnley, the second husband of Mary Queen of Scots, was murdered, and Mary herself thought to be implicated in the crime. His conjecture is strengthened by the fact that there were ballads published at this time which also associated Mary with Clytemnestra.³² Phillips further speculates that the dramatist was John Puckering, Speaker of the House of Commons, and hostile to Mary. Drawing his suppositions together Phillips proposes that Pikeryng was demonstrating the sort of "circumstances under which one queen might properly be deposed without violating the principle of royal sovereignty everywhere".³³

De Chickera's and Phillips's arguments serve, respectively, to strengthen and elucidate Pikeryng's apparent justification of revenge. Phillips's speculation is most helpful in suggesting what the

32. J.E. Phillips, "A Revaluation of Horestes", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 18 (1955), 227-44. Phillips includes a footnote referring to George Buchanan's similar identification of Mary with Clytemnestra, p. 233.

33. Phillips, p. 230.

dramatist's intentions may have been and the lengthy attention given by Pikeryng to political accord and good leadership at the end of the play lends support to such a speculation. However, neither interpretation resolves the ambiguity which clouds the early part of the play. Happé takes another approach, seeking to penetrate the moral impasse through the Morality convention.³⁴ He suggests that Horestes is finally presented as a worthy ruler because he has overcome the evil passion of revenge, symbolized in the Vice figure. Revenge is conquered when his "contrarey", Amity, takes control of Horestes' conduct. Happé says that "after the 'temptation' of Horestes, the play is really concerned with the purification of the revenge motive".³⁵ He goes on to demonstrate how Pikeryng's departure from his source material has kept his hero isolated, to a certain extent, from the extreme cruelties of his mother's death, as Caxton depicts them. Happé's exegesis of the play is satisfactory because it does focus on its troublesome ambiguity and, in fact, emphasises it, because he notes that "revenge does not fit easily into such a moral framework" and adds that because of Pikeryng's own concern with "the moral justification of revenge ... moral ambivalence becomes one of the leading motifs in this tragic action".³⁶ Regardless of whether or not this ambivalence might accord with the sort of attitude Phillips attributes to Pikeryng, the text of the play as the dramatist has presented it does not succeed in whitewashing the evil inherent in the temptation of its protagonist. Near the end of the play Idumeus's persuasion of Menelaus (p. 43) to forget his own desire for retaliation against Horestes perpetuates the sense of revenge as an evil, and substantiates the Morality attitude that Horestes has to be redeemed from this evil

34. P. Happé, "Tragic Themes in Three Tudor Interludes", *Studies in English Literature*, V (1965), 214-20.

35. Happé, p. 218.

36. Happé, pp. 216-17.

and won by its contrary, Amity. The final words of the play, spoken by Truth, might well be seen as directed at those tyrannical judges of *Apilus and Virginia* and *Cambises*. In spite of the early wilfulness of Horestes, the calm and reasoned meetings of the kings, Idumeus's pacification of Menelaus and the conversion of Horestes himself, provide a striking antithesis to the sort of unruly, impassioned behaviour that dominate the tyrant plays.

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92)³⁷ is a very different sort of revenge play. Kyd is much more of a dramatist, as we understand the word - much more aware of the potential of theatre - and his play in its structure of theatre within theatre develops much more of this potential and is able to inject a highly ironic conception of the world and man himself. Not only is there a play (*Soliman and Perseda*) within a play in which all grievances are avenged, but the play involving the living characters of the Spanish and Portuguese courts is itself overlooked by Andrea's ghost and the figure of Revenge. Within the play there are various scenes which echo this technique, and the whole is, of course, viewed by the playhouse audience.

In *The Spanish Tragedy* Revenge is no longer a Vice figure reminiscent of the Morality convention as he is in *Horestes*, but a sort of Platonic realization in the next world of the human passion for revenge. He also acts as an agent for the gods. The world picture that is projected through Revenge and these Senecan deities is a disturbing one. While Andrea is assured by Revenge that Balthazar will be "deprived of life by Bel-imperia"(1.i.89), he is to witness

37. Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J.R. Mulryne (London: Benn, 1970). All reference to the text of this play are from this edition.

the foul murder of his friend, Horatio, and what this entails for Horatio's parents and Bel-imperia (11.v). When he complains of this to Revenge (11.vi), he really focusses on the evils inherent in revenge itself: the multiplication of crimes and the implication of innocent people. Part of the process of Revenge's operation to effect the promised revenge on Andreas' behalf is to implicate the innocent Horatio and thereby formulate a sufficient motive for vengeance-seeking in the mortal world. It is an untidy method, at least, and indeed Revenge's promise to "turn their friendship into fell despite,/... their bliss to misery" (1.v.6-9) forecasts the intrigue and bloodshed to which revenge is potentially vulnerable. Revenge's reassurance to Andrea that "the sickle comes not till the corn be ripe" (11.vi.9) might describe an eventual and effective revenge, but it scarcely denotes any concern for justice. The gods that determine events in *The Spanish Tragedy* are impersonal and not concerned with justifying means to ends. On the other hand, there is the uncomfortable suggestion that Revenge merely has to sow the seeds of "fell despite" and allow men to act out their own natures.³⁸

The whole process of Andrea's watching events unfold from a sort of cosmic dress-circle and of Revenge's apparent sleeping (111.xv), suggest this, at least in part. The irony achieved through the audience's knowledge of both the worlds presented on the stage does not negate entirely either interpretation, possibly because Kyd wanted to posit both. Certainly Revenge's words "imagine thou/What 'tis to be subject to destiny" (111.xv.27-28) emphasize the sense of the predetermined nature of events, but Revenge's role does not seem to

38. Edwards also makes a similar observation: "To bring about what they have decreed, the gods use the desires and strivings of men." See Philip Edwards, Introduction to *The Spanish Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1977), p. lii.

deny the potential of the darker impulses of man to set in motion a process that is evil and destructive. The result is the kind of world where supernatural intervention co-exists with, and is indeed assisted by, man's own capacity for evil. In Kyd's play it is Lorenzo particularly who seems to embody these darker impulses.

The impression of an unconcerned deity permeates the entire play. Hieronimo is not only distraught because he fails to find justice in this world, but also because the very heavens seem to deny it:

O sacred heavens! if this unhallowed deed,
 Shall unrevealed and unrevenged pass,
 How should we term your dealings to be just,
 If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust?

(111.ii.5-11)

One of the problems in the play as far as this subject is concerned is the commingling of a Christian with a predominantly pagan deity. Mulryne comments that this is fitting in a play concerned with revenge.³⁹ My own contention is that this attitude is acceptable if we are content with the morality of the Senecan gods, but if we seek to question this morality or try to reconcile it within a Christian concept of justice, then we are in the kind of difficulty that has bedevilled many discussions of the play.

Within the Senecan framework of the play, it is interesting to examine the conclusion, where Andrea seems to have the authority to allot each character his reward or punishment. It is interesting because Andrea's requests act as a comment on the rightness or wrongness

39. Mulryne, p. xxi. Shakespeare was later to succeed in depicting the theme quite fittingly within a Christian framework, mostly because of his masterly psychological portrayal of Hamlet's inner conflict. *Hamlet* (1601) was, of course, a far more mature effort by Shakespeare at working out the revenge theme than *Titus Andronicus* (1594). It must be observed that Kyd's play is far more restrained than this early play of Shakespeare's.

of each character's actions, most notably, of course, those of the avengers, Hieronimo and Bel-imperia. Both are assigned to "sweet pleasure", which would seem to vindicate them, and the Duke of Castile, whose death is frequently seen as unjust and unnecessary is assigned by Revenge to the "deepest hell", presumably because he was opposed to Andrea's courtship of Bel-imperia.⁴⁰ This concludes the play satisfactorily within the Senecan framework that Kyd has constructed, and apparently satisfies Andrea, who understandably enough, at one time, was not too happy with Revenge's handiwork. Presumably the fact that he can offer heavenly reward to his friends is sufficient compensation.

Such a conclusion to the play need not, however, have prevented a contemporary audience from making its own judgments within the established Elizabethan vision of the world. When Hieronimo begins his soliloquy in the middle of the play, he stresses one of the important Christian attitudes towards revenge:

Vindicta mihi!
 Ay, heaven will be revenged of every ill,
 . . .
 Then stay, Hieronimo, attend their will,
 For mortal men may not appoint their time.

(111.xiii.1-5)⁴¹

He may go on to read Senecan lines which encourage him to dissemble in order to effect vengeance on his son's murderers, but it is not until he has found it impossible to achieve justice, or indeed even a hearing, from the king. Bowers maintains that when Hieronimo

40. Footnotes, p. 124 of Mulryne's edition of the play.

41. Boas reads this as an extract from Seneca's *Octavia*: "Vindicta debetur mihi". But as the following four lines reflect the biblical meaning (Romans: XII.19), it seems legitimate to interpret this as part of Hieronimo's inner struggle. Mulryne also construes the quotation as biblical, footnote, p.85. See Frederick S. Boas, *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 408.

decides to use "Italianate Machiavellian tactics" the audience loses all sympathy for him, and that his death at the end of the play is the penalty exacted from all such offenders in Elizabethan drama.⁴² This may well be the response of many, but is not Fate using Hieronimo to make good Revenge's prediction to Andrea? What of the sudden and unexplained appearance of Bel-imperia's letter which provides Hieronimo with the names of Horatio's murderers and the more explicable finding of Pedringano's letter which substantiates Bel-imperia's? Are these not signs that Fate is intervening in a way that assists Hieronimo to know his enemies? Indeed, just how free is Hieronimo? Also, because Lorenzo effectively blocks Hieronimo's overtures to the king, is he not led to fight with Lorenzo's style of cunning or Machiavellianism? One of the consequences of the sort of moral climate where Lorenzo operates is that the only ones to survive are those who can match fraud with fraud. It is not that the court itself is corrupt, but that Lorenzo has sufficient power to keep it and the plaintiff apart. No longer is there the rigid moral distinction between good and evil that is found in the earlier Morality plays, the religious polemical plays, or indeed the tyrant plays like *Apus and Virginia*. Bel-imperia is wronged, but she is no chaste virgin willing to give her life rather than retaliate. Rather she is like one of the women about whom the Vice, Revenge, in *Horestes* speaks when he is forced to flee: "Yet am I in good comfort ... the most parte of wemen to me be full kynde".⁴³

It is interesting to examine Bel-imperia's role within the revenge motif of the play. To begin with, Andrea does not himself appear to ask for revenge. Rather does he have the figure of Revenge

42. Bowers, p. 80.

43. *Horestes*, p. 46.

thrust upon him by the heavenly court of Proserpine and Pluto. On hearing of the manner of Andrea's death in battle, it is Bel-imperia who strengthens the theme of revenge as it concerns Andrea, when she ponders on the means to avenge the death of her lover and decides: "Yes, second love shall further my revenge" (1.iv.66). Thus she implicates Horatio. Yet she too, is very much a tool of Revenge, and although her early motives for encouraging Horatio are dubious, her simulated love eventually becomes genuine.

In attempting to measure the degree of Hieronimo's culpability or disintegration - and Bel-imperia's as it concerns Horatio - it is important to recognize that the murder of Horatio provides the only justifiable cause for revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Kyd takes care to emphasize the fact that Hieronimo is renowned for his high reputation as Knight Marshall:

There's not any advocate in Spain
That can prevail, or will take half the pain
That he will, in pursuit of equity.

(111.xiii.52-54)

Moreover, after his son's murder, he is careful to gather sufficient evidence regarding the crime; he does not embark indiscriminately on the path of vengeance. Kyd's inclusion of Bazulto's grief for his murdered son is a deliberate mirroring of Hieronimo's suffering, and so it acts to emphasize the justice of his cause. His disintegration may begin with his dissembling and his decision to go "down to hell, and in this passion/Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's court" (111.xiii), but this resolve is made because "on this earth justice will not be found" (111.xiii.108), nor can he find it in his appeals to heaven. The audience can appreciate the irony in such appeals just as much as the advocate's frustration, since it is aware "that his agony and frustration are part of the process of heavenly

justice".⁴⁴ Because of the constant thwarting of human justice by Lorenzo and the manipulation of supernatural justice by the gods, it is easier to feel sympathy for Hieronimo than it is for Horestes. This is partly because Hieronimo agonizes over a means to achieve a just vengeance whereas Horestes simply demands it, and partly because in Horestes' world, justice does seem to preside within the palaces of Idumeus, Nestor and Menelaus. Then too, Hieronimo's predicament is conveyed with far greater dramatic effect because Kyd achieves a characterization which may not equal that of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but certainly exceeds that of Pickeryng's *Horestes*.

However this conclusion is not meant to deny the moral tension which Kyd injects into his play by the hints of a Christian morality. When Isabella pictures Hieronimo "backed with a troop of fiery cherubins,/...Singing sweet hymns" (111.viii.18-20), the heaven she imagines has Christian overtones. The same may be said of Hieronimo's assertion that "all the saints do sit soliciting/For vengeance..." (1V.i.33-34) on Horatio's behalf. More dramatically, Hieronimo enters the third act with a soliloquy which resounds with biblical resonance in its cautionary words "*Vindicta mihi!*"⁴⁵ His searching for revenge through the machinery of legal justice slows his pursuit of active revenge, and posits the alternative which might have appealed to a law-abiding viewer of the play. It also seems possible to censure Hieronimo for his failure to present his case to the king, when, standing before him and equipped with the damning evidence of Pedringano's letter, he muffs his lines and with his dagger begins to

44. G.K. Hunter, "Ironies of Justice in *The Spanish Tragedy*", *Renaissance Drama*, VIII (1965), 98.

45. Even if Boas is correct, and the debt is to Seneca rather than the Bible, for an audience the association of ideas would produce the same effect. See footnote 41 for earlier reference to Boas in this connection.

rip "up the bowels of the earth" (111.xii.71). However, such delays are probably due to the dramatic requirements of the play, and Kyd would seem to portray Hieronimo's conduct as due to a fit of madness.⁴⁶ Whatever the reason, Hieronimo's behaviour destroys his chances of effecting revenge through legal processes. Then too, Revenge's words to Andrea that the latter will see Balthazar "deprived of life by Bel-imperia" (1.i.89), should indicate that Hieronimo's opportunity is fated not to succeed. The classical pantheon to which Revenge belongs would indeed seem to favour blood-revenge as it is ultimately achieved through Hieronimo and Bel-imperia.

Nevertheless, there are clear denunciations of revenge. The Viceroy of the Portuguese court claims: "They reckon no laws that meditate revenge" (1.iii.48), and the final scene in the Spanish court conveys the waste and desolation which blood-revenge wreaks on the state (1V.iv.203-17). Importantly Balthazar's decision to seek revenge against Horatio is insufficiently motivated. It is this decision of Balthazar together with the devious plotting of the arch-villain, Lorenzo, which triggers off the whole mechanism of revenge and the blocking of justice. It is this evil alliance that Kyd would seem to be really condemning in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and it is this evil that wrecks the career of the just advocate and results in such bloodshed and waste. When Lorenzo deliberately blocks the machinery of justice to Hieronimo, he stifles the lawful way for the expiation of an evil.

Hieronimo himself links the concepts of justice and revenge, when he speaks of "soliciting for justice and revenge" (111.vii.14) and of "just revenge" (111.xiii.143), so that an audience is confronted

46. See Bowers, pp. 69-70.

by both these themes in *The Spanish Tragedy*.⁴⁷ Just as it is asked to assess the evils of revenge, so it is asked to assess the quality of justice. Hunter refers to Andrea's search for justice in the classical afterlife, where "the higher court orders ... that he should be sent back to earth to observe how the gods operate *there*". Since these gods have a complete disregard for the bloodshed and suffering of innocent people in a cause an audience would not find valid, one could hardly be impressed by the nature of their justice. In fact, at one stage, Andrea does make a complaint (11.vi.1-6). Yet, chaotic and unconcerned though it might be, its seemingly haphazard machinery succeeds in punishing offenders like Serberine, Pedringano, Balthazar, and above all, Lorenzo, the chief evildoer and thwarter of justice in the Spanish court. The two servants are "small fry" in the world of villainy, and Balthazar is a rather mean-spirited and second-rate intriguer, although he causes so much trouble. Lorenzo is in quite another category. Depending on the date of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and whether or not it preceded Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Lorenzo could well be the first of those characters who were to become known as Machiavellian villains.⁴⁸ In Kyd's play Lorenzo orchestrates the murder of Horatio, plays upon the avarice of his minor accomplices until he cunningly eliminates them, and effectively stands between Hieronimo and the court where the advocate must seek for just

47. See Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd. Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 84, and Hunter, p. 92. Both Freeman and Hunter note the importance of the theme of justice.

48. See Freeman, p. 56, and also Hardin Craig, *The Literature of the English Renaissance 1485-1660* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 80, 82. Craig dates *The Spanish Tragedy* as early as 1583-84, and *The Jew of Malta* conjecturally as 1589.

vengeance.⁴⁹ His motives are rather obscure, but it is reasonable to assume that pride and the desire for power activate him as well as a nature that of itself is prone to be that of the intriguer. As is frequently the case, the evil of this sort of offender is so potent that it isolates and alienates him from others: "I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend" (111.ii.118).⁵⁰ As with most Machiavellian villains, virtuous characters cannot assail him. Hieronimo has to descend to his level in order to outwit him.⁵¹ In doing so, the erstwhile virtuous adjudicator becomes tainted, but in the procedure Lorenzo receives his just deserts. However, it is the controlling arm of Revenge that manipulates and directs this retribution. In the process of effecting Balthazar's punishment, the guilty suffer as well as the innocent. Perhaps Kyd is really inviting the audience to consider the seemingly equivocal nature of all supernatural justice, whether it be classical or Christian in its orthodoxy, for the good often suffer as well as the guilty.

Such a conclusion seems to shift the thematic weight of *The Spanish Tragedy* to an examination of divine justice, and the smallness of man's attempts when viewed against a predetermined master plan. The entire structure of *The Spanish Tragedy* with its "long view through theatres within theatres"⁵² seems to emphasize the essentially

49. Kyd provides another such villain in the person of Villuppo in the Portuguese court, who like the Vice of the Moralities, is more forthcoming with his reasons for taking a vicious course. See 1.iii.93-95. His evil never develops to the intensity of Lorenzo's, because it is dealt with promptly by a legal system of justice. This emphasizes what should be the case in the Spanish court.

50. Compare Gloucester in *3 Henry VI*, V.vii.83.

51. Jensen also makes this point. See Ejner J. Jensen, "Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*: The Play explains itself", *JEGP*, LXIV (1965), 15.

52. Alvin Kernan, "The Plays and the Playwrights", in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, Vol. 111, 1576-1613, eds. Clifford Leach and T.W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 260.

theatrical nature of man's actions. Such a reading of the play is indeed a disturbing one. Edwards avoids the necessity of coming to this conclusion in regard to the meaning of the play by insisting on the skilful and essentially contrived nature of the drama, its un-Christian emphasis and its call for the suspension of normal moral beliefs, as revenge is enacted in a manner which pleases the Senecan gods. He says: "if its moral attitudes are mistaken for the 'real life' attitudes of the dramatist, then the play has an appalling message".⁵³ I agree with Edwards that *The Spanish Tragedy* is a great achievement in the world of Elizabethan "make-believe", but would suggest, nevertheless, that the "appalling message" may be intentional; that the use of the metaphor of theatre exists for moral as well as entertainment purposes. While the play invites condemnation of the justice dispensed by its Senecan gods, it is really part of the same exercise for it to denounce a world where Revenge with its dangerously single-minded purpose operates unchecked. Thus Kyd's purpose may be seen as condemning revenge through the denunciation of the Senecan justice system rather than through its tormented victim, Hieronimo. That Hieronimo goes beserk in Act. 1V.iv is yet another example of the horrendous destruction of which revenge is capable. Such an exegesis allows for the continual association of justice and revenge and its undoubted thematic importance in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

The evil of the Machiavellian Lorenzo may seem to fall outside this area in the sense that here we are faced with inexcusable and obscurely motivated evil as it appears in a single human being. In many ways Lorenzo can be seen as resembling the Vice figure,⁵⁴ and

53. Edwards, p. 1x.

54. Spivack notes that Lorenzo's obscurely motivated villainy gives him some kinship with Iago, and that he belongs within the homiletic method established by the Vice figure convention. See Spivack, pp. 34 and 364-65. In this regard, see particularly 1.i.97-105.

there is also a link between him and the figure of Revenge. Both are coldly impersonal and ruthlessly single-minded in achieving their ends. Justice, as we would interpret it, has no place in their scheme of things.

The corrupting effect that Revenge and Lorenzo have upon the world of *The Spanish Tragedy* is repeated with much greater emphasis in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (1602) by Henry Chettle.⁵⁵ In this play the very atmosphere, strongly and effectively evoked through the imagery, suggests a dark, dank world. The retreat where Hoffman has hidden away is described by Martha as

. . . the dismal'st grove
That ever eye beheld, noe woodnimphes here⁵⁶
Seeke with their agill steps to outstrip the Roe,
Nor doth the sunsucke from the queachy plot
The ranknes and the venom of the Earth
It seemes frequentlesse for the use of men:
Some basiliskes, or poysonous serpents den!

(ll. 1999-2005)

When Hoffman sends Lodowick and Lucibella to the chapel, plotting Lodowick's death, the princess speaks of the bank of "sleeping flowers, that misse the Sunne" (ll. 844-45). The dreariness of caves, the rankness and gloom of the earth are all presented as a fitting environment for the fostering and enactment of revenge. The stormy sea even plays its part in offering the opportunity for a revenge, long dormant, to break from its restraining bonds. Hoffman rejoices that the shipwrecked Prince Otho, the son of his father's enemy, has been

55. Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (Malone Society Reprints: Oxford Univ. Press, 1950 (1951)). All references to the text of the play are from this edition. Bowers thinks that this play may have been written before 1602. See Bowers, p. 125.

56. Obvious spelling misprints have been corrected throughout; e.g. here in l.2000 "ever" is spelt "evcr" in the text of the play.

delivered to him, cast up by the "belique sea/... from her fomy entrailles by mischance"(ll. 27-28). He goes on to address the elements with emotion resembling religious fervour, for he serves revenge as another might a god: his father's bones hung up in chains in a ghastly sort of travesty of a religious effigy:

Roare sea and winds, and with celestiall fires,
Quicken high projects, with your highest desires.

(ll. 29-30)

This image of the world, so effectively and constantly evoked throughout the play, is presented as so organic to the growth of revenge that it actually seems to generate it, and once it has been given birth, Hoffman addresses it with unholy glee: "Revenge I kisse thee, vengeance y'are at liberty..." (l. 63)

Hoffman is a play wherein the blackest aspects of revenge are demonstrated. There could be no means of justifying it as in *Horrestes*, nor could one be sympathetic with the avenger at any time, as is the case in *The Spanish Tragedy*. I do not agree that Hoffman comes "in the direct line of such revengers as Hieronimo".⁵⁷ Hieronimo never embarks with such wild abandon on a scheme to murder all the kin of his son's murderers, and never is Hoffman concerned with justice as Hieronimo is. Hoffman's five victims are killed on stage. His first, Prince Otho, is disposed of in more grisly detail than the audience is at first aware, for Lorrique later reveals to his captors that Hoffman "Buried the flesh, the bones are they that hang/Close by his fathers" (ll. 2127-28).

There is something particularly furtive in the manner of all the deaths that Hoffman engineers, and the environment in which

57. Bowers, p. 128.

the murders are perpetrated reflects or underlines the stealth which accompanies each crime. Otho is momentarily deluded into thinking that he is with a friend, but his ultimate fate is a fearful repetition of Hoffman's father's. Hoffman then assumes the identity of the trusted Otho and so has free access to the court of his enemy. Lodowick is duped into wearing Grecian disguise and is slain as a Greek interloper by his own brother on the sunless riverbank to which Lucibella refers, and upon which it is also thought that Lucibella herself lies dead. In the darkness and confusion, her father, the Duke of Austria, is slain by an unknown hand, and Hoffman is accused by Saxony. Hoffman's answer is a pious

If I thought so, i'de fall upon the point,
 But I am innocent of such an ill:
 Kill my good kinsman, Duke of Austria;
 Then were Prince Otho of Luninberg set downe
 In sad dispaire blacke book to rave and die;
 But I am free of such impiety.

(ll. 1042-47)

Later, alone with Lorrique, he dismisses Austria's murder with callous impatience, when the latter asks if Saxony committed the crime:

Come, come, hee's dead, eyther by him or me,
 Noe matter, hee's gone: ther's more to goe.

(ll. 1121-22)

The poor, simple Jerom, who with his man, Stilt, has provided the audience with some comic entertainment earlier in the play, is persuaded by a devious Lorrique, disguised as a French doctor, to administer poison to Prince Otho, who is, of course, Hoffman in disguise. As Jerom has already sought to mount a highly inept rebellion in an attempt to be revenged upon the usurper of his inheritance, Lorrique's plot is a welcome means whereby the bravado of

58. Note the resemblance in both these utterances of Hoffman to Shakespeare's Richard III, for example, III.vii.153-59, IV.ii.18-19.

Jerom's threat to seek "red revenge in robes of fire" (l. 508) might be realized. Of course, the real victims are to be Jerom and his father, Ferdinand. Thus death follows death against a background which is Gothic in its dreary and sinister surroundings, its methods, and in its macabre machinations of disguise and pretended objectives.

Hoffman's insatiable appetite for revenge illustrates how dangerous an evil vengeance can become when it is realized in its worst aspects. The long hibernation, as it were, of Hoffman's passion, seems to have produced a particularly warped evil which, when at liberty, feasts upon itself and flourishes. Hoffman's language demonstrates this excessive, gluttonous element: "my destinies are good,/ Revenge hath made me great by shedding blood" (ll. 642-43), and "Ile swim to my desires, through seas of blood" (l. 2291). The single-mindedness, which is one of Revenge's characteristics in *The Spanish Tragedy*, is again evident throughout *Hoffman*, from the homage the protagonist demonstrates towards revenge in the opening scene, to speeches like: "Now Scarlet Mistris.../Thrust forth thy blood-stained hands, applaud my plot" (ll. 1357-58), to Hoffman's acceptance of his ultimate defeat: "I deserve it that have slackt revenge" (l. 2611). In *Hoffman* revenge may not be personified as is the case in *Horestes* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, but its clandestine existence is made palpable and even more fearful in the horror of Hoffman's personality.

Irony, which is an important factor in Kyd's play, plays its part in Chettle's. Enjoying the success of his vengeful career, Hoffman asks Lorrique "what can fortune doe/That may divert my straine of pollicy" (ll. 1669-70). He is told that Martha's husband, who is meant to be one of his victims, is already dead. Confronted by Martha, Hoffman can no longer pretend to be her son. He fabricates

a story which will explain his impersonation and she promises to adopt him. He thanks her in words which are indeed tempting fate:

I thanke your Highnes, and of just heaven crave
The ground I wrong you in, may turne my grave.

(ll. 1898-99)

Eventually he develops a passion for Martha - an excessive passion, which seems to be the only sort of which he is capable - and his attempt to possess her at any cost brings about his downfall. In effect, his insatiable passions are his ultimate defeat.

Chettle's play is far more single-minded in its purpose than either Kyd's or Pikeryng's. Chettle is concerned to depict revenge at its blackest, and he does so by every literary means at his disposal. One of the most successful is through his portrayal of Hoffman, and of his accomplice, Lorrique, in a manner which resembles the convention of the Vice figure. The audience may experience an initial horror at the account Hoffman gives of his father's death, but this is soon lost as Hoffman wades "through seas of blood" to effect a revenge that is widespread and devious and has no concern with justice whatsoever. Threatening Lorrique, Hoffman finds himself on fertile ground, as he seeks an accomplice who "wouldst kisse and kille, imbrace and stabbe" (l. 85). Lorrique, as befits a potential villain, tells the audience: "this is an excellent fellow/A true villaine fitter for me than better company" (ll. 101-02). The homiletic aspect of the Morality Vice is demonstrated by Lorrique's declaration, as Chettle uses the convention to hold up for the audience's inspection the precise evil which Hoffman and his accomplice embody:

I am halfe a Monarke: halfe a fiend
Blood I begun in and in blood must end

yet this Clois is an honest villaine, ha's conscience in his killing⁵⁹
of men: he kills none but his fathers enemies, and there
issue, 'tis admirable, 'tis excellent, 'tis well 'tis meritorious,
where? in heaven? no, hell.

(ll. 659-64)

One is as devious as the other in devising plots for proposed victims. Caught between the survivors who have discovered the truth, and Hoffman, Lorrique continues his intricate plotting, confident but wary, as he sets out to ensnare Hoffman in order to save his own life. He suggests to Hoffman a scheme by which the latter might succeed in satisfying his passion for Martha, should she fail to respond to his overtures:

Doe a mans part, please her before she goe,
Or if you see, that she turnes violent,
Shut her perpetuall prisoner in that den;
Make her a Philomel, prove Tereus....

(ll. 2385-88)

There is irony again in the circumstances of Lorrique's death, which follows swiftly. Both Lorrique and Hoffman speak the truth about each other, but neither realizes it as such. At the same time the audience observes the treachery it has been expecting for much of the play, as Hoffman has earlier remarked of his accomplice:

A pretious villaine . . .

I will preferre him: he shall be prefer'd
To hanging peradventure; why not? 'tis well....

(ll. 746-51)

When Martha learns that Hoffman has killed her son so barbarically, her reactions are devoid of all normal emotion. When Lorrique explains that Otho's skeletal remains hang beside those of Hoffman's

59. There is textual confusion regarding the hero's name. He is also denoted as "Clois" (l. 661) and at l. 1209 the unexpected prefix "Sar1" appears. See Introduction to this edition of play, pp. vii-viii.

father, she merely says:

Let them hang a while
Hope of revenge in wrath doth make mee smile.

(ll. 2129-30)

Indeed Chettle has included all the extremes of behaviour in the vengeance-seekers; in this case it is the emotionless response that anticipates the prospect of blood revenge rather than indulgence in mourning for the tragic death of a loved one. Again when the court learns of the full extent of Hoffman's treachery from Lorrique, they join hands and in a circle chant:

Vengeance, vengeance, fall
On him, or suddaine death upon us all.

(ll. 2248-49)

The idea of a world where witchcraft and spells are credited would seem implicit here.⁶⁰ As a welcome change we have comedy in Jerom's attitude to revenge:

. . . they say I am a foole Stilt,
but follow me; ile seeke out my notes of Machiavel, they say
hee's an odd politician.

Stilt's reply completes the fun:

I faith hee's so odd, that he hath driven even honesty
from all mens hearts.

(ll. 509-13)

It would seem rather novel to use Machiavelli for comic effect.⁶¹

60. See also ll. 2034-35 in this regard.

61. Reese refers to the "burlesquing [of] the pseudo-Machiavellian villain" in English drama of the time and quotes Aaron's lines from *Titus Andronicus*, V.i.125 ff. as an example of this. See M.M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty* (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 97. While I would suggest that much of this burlesquing resembles the conduct of the Vice in earlier Morality plays, there is an obvious difference between Chettle's treatment of Machiavelli in the above scene and Shakespeare's in *T.A.* For more in the same vein, see ll. 468-70 of *Hoffman* for a tilt at the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

The scenes that feature Jerom and Stilt provide the only respite, apart from the brief scene with the tragic lovers, in a play that is crammed with the most gruesome acts of revenge. Extravagant language and evocative imagery of a sort that conjures up scenes of Gothic horror emphasize the essential evil. The ominous forebodings which some of the characters experience (e.g., ll. 119-21, 1489-91, 2365-72), and the general mistrust that prevails throughout much of the play contribute to an atmosphere that suggests menace and insecurity, and which brings to mind Lorrique's early words that "a mans overwhelmd without order" (ll. 37-38).

Quite apart from Hoffman and Lorrique, the world of the play is not attractive. Subsequent events may erase the severity of what Hoffman relates as his father's fate, but Ferdinand's intransigent attitude to the pitiful "rabble of poore souldiers" (111.1i) is a reminder of the severity of his administration. Yet counteracting this is Mathias's comment that man cannot be held accountable for acts of evil to which he is compelled (ll. 2185-87). Even so as far justice is concerned, the word may appear in *Hoffman*, but it does not have any status as an institution within the world of the play. Hoffman is not to be punished by a court or any sort of judicial system, but rather is he, too, to be a victim of the revenge he has set in motion. All characters in the play seek to redress wrongs through revenge. Mathias who makes the seemingly enlightened statement about the non-culpability of evil acts committed under compulsion is the very man who recommends that Hoffman's punishment should be in the form of revenge which is "fit, just, and square" (l. 2203).⁶² Finally it is the evil itself that is self-destructive.

62. See ll. 2200-2206. This is part of the scene referred to earlier, where all join hands and chant vengeance to Hoffman.

There seems to be no sense of a religious or higher form of moral law in Chettle's play.⁶³ Villains like Hoffman and Lorenzo do not seem to regard themselves as subject to the ordinary moral laws of man or God. This is one of the reasons that they speak of their sense of alienation, and perhaps it is because they know no fear outside normal precautionary bounds that their evil is so powerful. In Chettle's play Hoffman eliminates his accomplice, as does Shakespeare's Richard III, and both become the victims of their own evil. This is more clearly seen in Hoffman's case because it is a part of his intricate scheming that effects his downfall. There is no hint of any divine retribution. Because Chettle does not project a sense of moral law or order, the world he proposes is indeed a disturbing one. Since his play follows *The Spanish Tragedy* by a span of between ten and twenty years, it gives some support to the theory that Kyd may also have envisaged a similar world.

An evil that is common to all the plays in this chapter is realizable in the ungoverned violence of man's passions. Both Apius and Hoffman become subject to a lust that brings about their ultimate defeat. Cambises and Hoffman share in a **savage** tendency to mutilate the bodies of their victims, both in the name of a sort of justice. While *Horestes*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hoffman* may be said to focus upon the evil of revenge, it is really the last play only which singles out this evil and inspects it in its blackest light. Kyd's drama is the most complex play treated in the chapter, because it grapples with the serious problem of how to achieve justice in a world that is darkened by revenge and the enigma of obscurely motivated evil in man.

63. There are religious connotations, however, in the brief warning against suicide. See ll. 1468-69. However, as Hoffman makes this to Mathias, it cannot be taken seriously, as Hoffman desires to kill Mathias himself through some vengeful trickery.

CHAPTER IV

PLAYS OF AMBITION

Beware ambition, 'tis a sugred pill
That fortune layes, presuming minds to kill.

Bodenham's *Belvedere*

This chapter is devoted to an examination of the dramatic treatment of ambition and its potential for evil. Seen largely as a vehicle through

which man's will can conquer and dominate in *Tamburlaine the Great*, the focus is shifted in *Selimus* so that its obsessive qualities are concentrated upon in a manner which demonstrates that overweening ambition can lead man to realize his greatest potential for evil. Ambition in its presumptuous form can lead man to set himself above the angels in *Doctor Faustus*, but in the more mundane setting of *Arden of Feversham*, man's ambitious strivings are depicted within a social, middle-class environment away from the exoticisms of oriental courts and the necromancy of an intellectual Faustus.

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587-88)¹ is seen by many as illustrating the aspiring spirit which was characteristic of Renaissance man.² It is generally considered that Marlowe wrote the second part of *Tamburlaine* because of the outstanding success of the first part. It is therefore permissible to consider the first part by itself, since Marlowe may originally have conceived his hero only as the triumphant warrior whose ambitious career follows an

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1. Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. J.S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1981). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.
 2. Michel Poirier, *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1951), p. 100. Poirier says that this is particularly the case in the first part of the play.

ever ascending spiral.³ Although Tamburlaine's will is the dominating force until the end of Part 2, yet there is a difference in the second play which I hope to demonstrate in due course. As Farnham points out, the pattern of increasing triumphs is a complete reversal of the idea of medieval *de casibus* tragedy,⁴ for from the beginning to the end of Part 1 Tamburlaine does indeed "hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains" (1.ii.173). The conqueror maintains with magnificent certitude that stars at his birth promised that he should wear the Persian crown (1.ii.91-92). With eloquent speeches studded with astral imagery he wins the co-operation of Cosroe, who would oppose him like Theridamas beforehand:

We'll chase the stars from heaven and dim their eyes
That stand and muse at our admired arms.

(11.iii.23-24)

Unfortunately for Cosroe it is he who holds the title to the crown which Tamburlaine desires. Tamburlaine justifies his treacherous retaliation against an unsuspecting Cosroe:

Nature

Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world

Will's us to wear ourselves and never rest....

(11.vii.18-26)

Here Tamburlaine identifies the sort of ambition which the Elizabethan moralist would have condemned as presumptuous and dangerous. Although the lawful and unlawful aspects of ambition were acknowledged, yet it is true that there were lengthy denunciations which did not

3. See G.I. Duthie, "The Dramatic Structure of Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine the Great', Parts 1 and 11", *English Studies* (1948). Vol.1 of a new series of *Essays and Studies*, 101.

4. Farnham, p. 369.

differentiate between the sorts of ambition man might have. Ambition could tempt men through immoderate love of worldly power to covetousness, pride, murder and any act that furthered his desires.⁵ One can clearly see the lessons from the earlier Morality plays in this reasoning, where man is cautioned against preoccupation with the goods of this world. A play like Skelton's *Magnificence* takes the more tolerant view and preaches "measure" and "moderation" as man's reliable guide. There would seem to be no such moralizing, however, in Marlowe's play, because his hero is allowed to indulge his inordinate desire for power without the check of a fall or retribution. Again I would like to emphasize that at this point it would seem valid to make this comment regardless of any interpretation of Part 2, since Marlowe's original intention may only have been to write Part 1. An overall view of the two parts will follow later.

In Part 1 Marlowe takes care to use every device at his command to win admiration and awe for his hero. Although only a lowly Scythian shepherd by birth, in his armour he is able to inspire a homage in Techelles which is prophetic in its perception:

Methinks I see kings kneeling at his feet,
And he with frowning brows and fiery looks
Spurning their crowns from off their captive heads.

(1.ii.55-57)

Menaphon describes Tamburlaine in words that associate both his appearance and ambition with the god-like, so awesome is his presence:

Thirsting with sovereignty, with love of arms;
His lofty brows in folds do figure death....

(11.i.20-21)

Tamburlaine's own utterances soar poetically as he aligns himself with Jove:

5. See Farnham, pp. 344-51.

Jove sometimes masked in a shepherd's weed,
 And by those steps that he hath scaled the heavens
 May we become immortal like the gods.

(1.ii.198-200)

Theridamas is conquered completely by Tamburlaine's eloquence and appearance. There is no need for arms: "Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks" (1.ii.227). Such is Tamburlaine's effect on men who are adjudged worthy to be his friends, for the conqueror is himself impressed with Theridamas (1.ii.164).

Marlowe also demonstrates the superior stature of Tamburlaine by contrasting him with his enemies.⁶ The pronouncements which fall impressively from Tamburlaine's lips sound merely ridiculous or tyrannical when they speak. Having illustrated Tamburlaine's dynamic ability to attract and inspire a following, Marlowe presents Mycetes' ineffectual attempt to muster opposition to the Scythian shepherd:

Come, my Meander, let us to this gear;
 I tell you true, my heart is swoll'n with wrath....

(11.ii.1-2)

Cunningham notes that the word "gear" has a deflating effect.⁷ With its inevitable association with the language of the squabbling vices, this is certainly true. Nor is the description that Mycetes gives of his anger likely to instil fear, since the audience has noticed his penchant for deferring to others with a "better wit" to formulate his protests, so full is he of insubstantial bluster. Marlowe leaves one in no doubt as to where the fool stands, when in the heat of battle, Mycetes pronounces his wisdom in being able to distinguish the crown as the centre of the conflict:

6. See Eugene M. Waith, "Tamburlaine" in *Marlowe*, ed. Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 75-77.

7. Cunningham, footnote, p. 139.

Therefore in policy I think it good
 To hide it close: a goodly strategem,
 And far from any man that is a fool. . .
 Here will I hide it in this simple hole.

(11.iv.10-15)

Again the boastful manner in which the feats of Bajazeth are presented suggests a similarity between the prowess he possesses and that which the audience has seen displayed by Tamburlaine, but Bajazeth's utterances sound smug rather than impressive. In confident exchange, Argier tells Bajazeth: "... all flesh quakes at your magnificence", and the ruler replies: "True, Argier, and tremble at my looks" (111.i.48-49). Tamburlaine sums up the Turks as "full of brags" (111.iii.3), and stresses the difference that exists between him and his adversaries: "For Will and Shall best fitteth Tamburlaine" (111.iii.41). Waith points out that Tamburlaine is also shown as superior to the competent Cosroe, and that his treachery against Cosroe proves that he surpasses him in both daring and imagination.⁸ It is true that through such contrasts Marlowe succeeds in elevating Tamburlaine and devaluating his foes, but at the same time I would suggest that the audience may begin to have reservations about Tamburlaine's character when he turns against Cosroe, partly because he breaks the pattern of happy comradeship which he has established with the winning of Theridamas and Cosroe to his side. Moreover, the angry response of Cosroe and his men, for whom we have some respect, injects a jarring note into what has so far been an exhilarating picture of conquest.

Nevertheless Tamburlaine's extravagant claims are made good by the success of his campaigns, and because his verbal and physical

8. See Waith, p. 75.

excellence inspire his followers with an unquestioning confidence in his abilities and expectations. For this reason the first part of *Tamburlaine* is an exposition of one man's tremendous triumph of will.⁹ Tamburlaine never doubts the outcome and all opposition is toppled by his indomitable will to win:

He is not a general or a king, a man with all the sufferings and doubts that flesh is heir to, but an elemental force sweeping along like a river in spate, crushing all those who try to check or slacken its mighty rush. ¹⁰

With regard to Tamburlaine's relationship with Zenocrate, Marlowe is again careful to demonstrate the superior nature of his hero. He is no mere ravisher. Zenocrate is soon expressing her wish to "live and die with Tamburlaine" (111.ii.24). When Tamburlaine speaks with her father he assures him that his daughter is free from any "blot of foul in chastity" (V.i.487-88). Marlowe portrays their love in an exemplary light which contributes to our appreciation of Tamburlaine and also commends the fidelity of Zenocrate, for her loyalty never wavers even though she eventually comes to question Tamburlaine's career of conquest.

Marlowe's presentation of this superhuman figure with his will to power - a veritable Nietzschean *oberman* - met with the bitter disapproval of Robert Greene who spoke of Marlowe's writing as "daring God out of heaven with that Atheist *Tamburlan*...."¹¹ But since Greene would seem to be referring to the scene in which Tamburlaine dares Mahomet "in the name of another God" - the God in whom most Elizabethans believed - it is difficult to understand Greene's seizing on this

9. See Helen L. Gardner, "The Second Part of 'Tamburlaine the Great'", *Modern Language Review*, 37 (1942), 19.

10. Poirier, p. 95.

11. Quoted from Irving Ribner, "Greene's Attack on Marlowe: Some Light on *Alphonsus* and *Selimus*", *Studies in Philology*, 52 (1955), 162.

particular aspect of the play for his attack, unless it was due, as Cunningham suggests, to "envy and pique".¹² More specifically, Ribner thinks that Marlowe uncritically glorifies the nature of Tamburlaine's ambition and his style of kingship.¹³ It is certainly true that Marlowe does not moralize in the way that playwrights before him have done, nor is he interested *primarily* in denouncing evil ambition, nor in defending theories of Tudor absolutism. His foremost concern is in conveying the very essence of Tamburlaine's character to the audience - the exuberance and enthusiasm of an ambitious barbarian with "immortal longings", or the "noble savage", to which Waith alludes.¹⁴ Something of the conqueror's fresh, "primitive simplicity" which dominates the beginning of the play is captured precisely in this exchange:

Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles? ...
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?

(11.v.51-54)

The uncritical indulgence which Marlowe might seem to give his hero is partly due to the fact that the dramatist allows Tamburlaine to project much of his own image.¹⁵ The ritual of conquest with its days for white, red and black, signifying the mood of the conqueror, may seem an unnecessary or even slightly sadistic procedure, but what they are really indicative of is the high-aspiring noble savage's idea of what is ceremonially apt. It is appropriate that the sorts

12. Cunningham, p. 22.

13. See Ribner, pp. 163-64, 170.

14. Waith, p. 71.

15. It is also important to realize that Marlowe's enthusiasm for his hero largely repeats the impressive accounts of his sources, namely George Whetstone's version of Pedro Mexia and the account given by Petrus Perondinus. See Cunningham, pp. 10-14.

of roles that Tamburlaine sees himself as enacting - those of a kind of demigod and very much as "the scourge of God" - should be accompanied by ceremony and ritual. When Tamburlaine speaks of a day of mercy for the Damascenes he regards himself as magnanimous. If they do not co-operate he does not regard himself as lacking in mercy when he orders punishment as betokened by the black tents. Rather he considers the unrelenting foe to be at fault. His brief sorrow for the virgins may seem mere fatuity, but it is really a reminder of the mercy he might have shown had his enemies availed themselves of his magnanimity. This is how Tamburlaine sees his actions. Hence Marlowe is merely showing Tamburlaine as he is, not as he should be, and while there may be qualities that we can admire, yet there are evils for all to discern. Certainly he is barbarous, but this is part of his nature. The artistic achievement of Marlowe's play is that it conveys this so vividly to the audience. It is important to note that he is not the only barbarous ruler. Bajazeth's proclamation before he engages in battle with Tamburlaine tells something of the nature of Eastern potentates:

Let thousands die, their slaughtered carcasses
Shall serve for walls and bulwarks to the rest....

(111.iii.138-39)

Moreover his plans for Tamburlaine's punishment vie in their severity with what is meted out to him after his defeat:

He [Tamburlaine] shall be made a chaste and lustless eunuch
And in my sarell tend my concubines;
And all his captains that thus stoutly stand
Shall draw the chariot of my emperess....

(111.iii.77-80)

The women contribute their share to this native barbarism. Zenocrate speaks of the Turks "welt'ring in their blood" (111.iii.201),

and Zabina prays that God will send "murd'ring shot from heaven/To dash the Scythians' brains" (111.iii.196-97).

While Marlowe is intent upon creating the character of Tamburlaine as vividly as possible there are unmistakable signs, underlying this enthusiastic portrayal, of the evils inherent in such overreaching ambition. While Marlowe dazzles the audience with Tamburlaine's eloquent poetics and high-sounding aspirations in order to convey his hero's magnetism, this method is later used to highlight the true nature of Tamburlaine's conduct and achievements. As Cole rightly says:

... Tamburlaine persists in cloaking the cruelest of deeds in the most glowing accounts of his superhuman aspiration. The ironies implicit in such aspiration are brought out by the concrete stage-picture of the execution itself - the glowing words do not match the deed; the visual action undercuts the nature of the speech. If the irony of such juxtaposition is not intended, it represents a serious dramatic error.¹⁶

Surely the irony of such juxtaposition is very much a part of Marlowe's theatrical conception for his play. Imagine the visual impact of the scene where Bajazeth is taken from his cage and made to go down on all fours so that Tamburlaine can use him as a footstool to mount his throne. This ludicrous humiliation is accompanied by Tamburlaine's poetical rendering:

Now clear the triple region of the air
And let the majesty of heaven behold
Their scourge and terror tread on emperors.

....
For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,
....
Will send up fire to your turning spheres....

(1V.ii.30 ff.)

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16. Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, (New York: Gordian Press, 1962; 1972), p. 108. Although this statement of Cole's occurs in his discussion of Part 2 of *Tamburlaine*, I assume that he would agree that this juxtaposition occurs in the scene to which I refer since he makes earlier reference to the incongruity of grandiloquent expression accompanying macabre sights (pp.102-03).

Moreover Tamburlaine's method of addressing his caged victim has now much of the complacent grandiosity that was characteristic of an undefeated Bajazeth:

Base villain, vassal, slave to Tamburlaine,
Unworthy to embrace or touch the ground
That bears the honour of my royal weight....

(1V.ii.19-21)

Hence the pattern of contrasts as well as the grand speech is now being used to point up the excesses in Tamburlaine's conduct. While it may be true that Marlowe presents his hero in such a manner that he exceeds his opponents even in the redoubtable area of cruelty, surely we are meant to register more than mere admiration when confronted by the results of Tamburlaine's handiwork. Surely the cruelty and humiliation that culminates in the despairing deaths of Bajazeth and Zabina are meant to impress us with some of the horror experienced by Zenocrate. There may be no scene of denunciation at the end of Marlowe's play but Zenocrate's long speech covers much of the conventional moral attitudes, and it has the added effect of focussing on the accumulation of all the evils and placing them at the feet of Tamburlaine: "Ah Tamburlaine, wert thou the cause of this..." (V.i.336).¹⁷

In spite of the fact that Marlowe includes these insights into the nature of his hero and his ambition, *1 Tamburlaine* ends with his protagonist triumphant as conqueror and lover. This is not inconsistent with Marlowe's purpose, although it might break completely with the Elizabethan idea of tragedy. Marlowe has remained constant to his primary concern to keep the focus on Tamburlaine's character, but

17. Obviously I do not agree with Battenhouse's estimation of Zenocrate's character as "the very pattern of pagan, earthly beauty...devoid of religion or conscience". See Roy W. Battenhouse, *Marlowe's "Tamburlaine"* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1941; 1964), pp. 166-67.

since overweening ambition is an integral part of Tamburlaine's character, an inseparable part of Marlowe's task is an exegesis of that ambition. This is Marlowe's achievement - an analysis of Tamburlaine and his ambition. It is really an attempt to deal with the Morality problems which externalize man's nature, at a more naturalistic level, and Marlowe's purpose in *1 Tamburlaine* has been merely to investigate the phenomenon that is constituted in a Tamburlaine. That this investigation shows a balance that favours extremes of cruelty may signify Marlowe's apparent fascination with man's potential for inhumanity.

In *2 Tamburlaine* the process of revealing Tamburlaine's cruelty which is begun in the first part of the play is very much more the aim of the dramatist. His method is really to repeat the sorts of episodes that elucidate the warring nature of the protagonist's ambition - the warring nature that can only be satisfied with a continual diet of "blood and empery" (*1 Tamburlaine*, 11.vi.33). Sigismond's treachery against Orcanes recalls Tamburlaine's betrayal of Cosroe,¹⁸ but while it does this, Marlowe uses the incident to point up the hypocrisy of the Christians, an opportunity he will again avail himself of in *The Jew of Malta*.¹⁹ What is perhaps more interesting is that the audience sees that Orcanes has called on Christ for help and received it. Until now Tamburlaine has claimed exclusive rights to the God of Christians: "I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God.../Will first subdue the Turk..." (*1 Tamburlaine*, 11.iii.44, 46). The scene provokes speculation as to the eventual outcome, not specifically in regard to any conflict between Orcanes and Tamburlaine, but rather to the power that operates in the world beyond the reach

18. See Cunningham's footnote, p. 245.

19. See *The Jew of Malta*, 1.ii.99.

of human beings, even those with the divine pretensions of a Tamburlaine.

Events that follow repeat more closely the first part of the play. The famous scene heralded by Tamburlaine's "Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia" (1V.iii.1) is reminiscent of Bajazeth's suffering and humiliation, and the treatment Tamburlaine metes out to the concubines recalls his callousness to the virgins of Damascus. So does the slaughter of the governor and citizens of Babylon recapture and add to the senseless bloodshed and wanton cruelty of the sack of Damsacus. Having ordered his soldiers to use the Babylonian governor as a sort of target drill, Tamburlaine orders the drowning of "all, man, woman, and child" (V.i.156, 169), and commands that the books of the Koran be burnt. When Techelles returns to the stage he advises Tamburlaine that

Thousands of men, drowned in Asphaltis' lake,
Have made the water swell above the banks,
And fishes fed by human carcasses,
Amazed swim up and down upon the waves
As when they swallow asafoetida,
Which makes them fleet aloft and gasp for air.

(V.i. 203-08)

No wonder Tamburlaine complains suddenly of feeling "distempered". The cumulative effect of so much bloodshed caused by one being must surely cause congestion in even the most insatiate appetite.²⁰

The repetitive nature of 2 *Tamburlaine* is referred to by Cole as an "accentuation and further development of the first part's essentially ambivalent theme of 'honor' defined and achieved by bloody destruction".²¹ It is important, once again, to notice

20. This cumulative effect of bloodshed and horror is very noticeable in the tyrant and revenge plays, e.g., *Cambises* and *The Tragedy of Hoffman*. It is a very effective means of underlining the excesses of man's passions.

21. Cole, pp. 107-08.

that this is how all the warring characters of Marlowe's play define honour. Orcanes says of the Christian forces

Our Turkey blades shall glide through all their throats
And make this champion mead a bloody fen....

(2*T.* 1.i.31-32)

In this way Marlowe sets up an expectation of barbarity which the audience may well have considered typical of this region of the world. Some shape or limit is set to the ruthlessness of the barbarians, however, by the response Orcanes makes to Tamburlaine's slaying of his son, Calyphas:

Thou showest the difference 'twixt ourselves and thee
In this thy barbarous damned tyranny.

(2*T.* 1*V.*i.138-39)

This act stands apart from the other violent deaths in both plays because it is the first time that the audience has actually seen Tamburlaine kill, and because the slaying of a son is unnatural.²² Added to these especially damning implications of his act, is the sense in which it may be interpreted as a violence to the love Tamburlaine has had for Zenocrate. I disagree with Kocher's view of the slaying as an act of military justice with which an Elizabethan would sympathize.²³ Tamburlaine's chief complaint is that Calyphas's dislike of war is an affront to his own "name and majesty" (IV.i.90). Indeed since it is tempting to look for specific causes for Tamburlaine's death, it could well be the unnatural slaying of Calyphas together with the outrage and the nature of the curses which attend it, that supplies a plausible solution. The precise physiological

22. See Cole, pp. 106-07, where it is stated that Tamburlaine's slaying of his son has the effect of besmirching his honour.

23. Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe* (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1946), p. 263. Moreover, the slaying of kin was always condemned. *Cambises*, *Horrestes* and *Hamlet* are plays that reflect the aversion commonly displayed towards such acts.

content of Soria's curse (1V.i.178-81) would certainly seem to accord with Marlowe's explanation of Tamburlaine's death (V.iii.82-97).²⁴

Since Marlowe's attitude to the overweening ambition of his hero might be more easily comprehended through the different ways in which Tamburlaine's death might be interpreted, it is a worthwhile exercise to investigate some of these. The movement of both plays, and particularly the second, has been to juxtapose the bloody effects of Tamburlaine's ambition with his soaring poetical conception of it. As the process has continued the degree of Tamburlaine's cruelty has intensified, especially after the death of Zenocrate, who has been a "moderating influence" and perhaps "an essential part of his inspiration as a warrior".²⁵ The physiological description of Tamburlaine's illness, as prefigured by Soria's curse becomes the concrete expression of one man's self-destruction, a destruction brought about by unremitting indulgence in the excesses of an obsessive passion. To this extent Marlowe is completely conventional. In the grand pretensions of his hero's ambitions, however, Marlowe exceeds other playwrights, both in the quality of his protagonist's poetics, the spectacles he stages, and the goal to which he aspires - to be more than a man - to be a demigod:

. . . I exercise a greater name,
The scourge of God and terror of the world,
I must apply myself to fit those terms,
In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,
And plague such peasants as resist in me
The power of heaven's eternal majesty.

(2T. 1V.i.153-58)

As Cole says, Tamburlaine's "drive for superhumanity through martial

24. This explanation is among the causes suggested by Battenhouse, p. 257, and by Cole, p. 114.

25. Duthie, pp. 124, 123.

conquest leads inevitably to inhumanity".²⁶ Essentially, this amounts to a sin against one's own nature in which extreme indulgence in one's obsessive passions is so often shown as involving man.²⁷ While Tamburlaine's words convey a God who has "a dynamic rather than a moral force"²⁸ and a God who stands firmly behind Tamburlaine, yet it is true that Marlowe also projects the sense of a power which acts independently of Tamburlaine. This is something which the conqueror's obsessive ambition prevents him from realizing. The second play gradually reveals this discrepancy between aspiration and reality, and the series of frustrations which plague Tamburlaine - the disaffection of Almeda, the death of Zenocrate, seemingly inept sons, and Tamburlaine's own necessary submission to death - highlight an omnipotent will over which Tamburlaine has no sway. Whether Marlowe means this to be interpreted as "a God of purity as well as of power, and that he punishes the sins of men"²⁹ is not at all times clear, although it is so when Orcanes invokes the aid of the Christian God. If Tamburlaine's disintegration can be construed as self-caused, there is still the predominant sense of a power that wills his death.³⁰ In this *2 Tamburlaine* resembles the earlier Morality plays, where at the height of their worldly success the protagonist is brought low by death. To make this idea more tangible, Marlowe has Tamburlaine envisage death:

26. Cole, p. 113.

27. *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and *Selimus* are plays that demonstrate this strongly.

28. J.B. Steane, *Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 115.

29. Gardner, p. 21.

30. For this reason I cannot agree with Ribner who would seem to consider that Marlowe does not project the concept of a Providence who controls human affairs. Certainly Marlowe's God is presented with some subtlety, but his presence is felt, nonetheless. In this respect, man's free will is emphasized. For Ribner's comment, see "Greene's Attack on Marlowe...", 163.

See where my slave, the ugly monster Death,
 Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
 Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart
 Who flies away at every glance I give,
 And when I look away comes stealing on.

(V.iii.67-71)

Unlike the Morality hero, Tamburlaine does not shake or quiver.

Typically he transfers these emotions to death itself. As he "That have been termed the terror of the world" (V.iii.45) has confronted his foes and even the gods, so does he now confront the arch-enemy of life, Death. As he refused to accept the finality of Zenocrate's death by carrying her corpse "in a sheet of gold" from camp to camp with him, so now does he comfort himself with thoughts of a continued existence through the lives of his two sons, and spurning defeat he speaks of the "magnanimity/That nobly must admit necessity" (V.iii.200-01). But as Cole has commented, is he not really seeking "to escape from pain through imagination".³¹

Although Marlowe may include scenes of horrendous suffering and bloodshed through which we are able to censure Tamburlaine and his presumptuous aspirations, yet surely there is a very real sense in which Marlowe reveals his admiration for his hero. Through early triumph, his great sorrow at Zenocrate's death, and the dignified, but fearless acceptance of his own fate, Tamburlaine's poetics, like his courage, never falter. That he is so much larger than life in everything he does, and that he succeeds in his own eyes and in the eyes of his men throughout his life and even his death, makes Levin's understanding of the play seem to be a valid one:

Tamburlaine is an aesthetic spectacle, framed by an equivocal morality, which is flouted more emphatically

31. Cole, p. 120.

than it is asserted.³²

Whatever the conclusion about Marlowe's attitude to evil in *Tamburlaine* might be, it seems undeniable that he was the first playwright to have projected aspiration with such strong aesthetic appeal rather than explicit moral judgment. While a moral judgment may be implicit, the aesthetic appeal is maintained until the end of the play. This does not negate Marlowe's probable intention of encouraging the audience's perception of the futility, especially the tragic futility, of man's striving to stretch and break the bounds of human limitations; rather perhaps does it underline this aspect of Tamburlaine's endeavour.

The play *Selimus*,³³ whose authorship is unknown,³⁴ was printed in 1594 as "The First part of the Tragicall raigne of Selimus". As this edition of the play mentions, the epilogue promises a second part, but no trace of such a play has ever been discovered. The play itself provides good reason for the supposition that its author was strongly influenced by *Tamburlaine*. The vehemence of Robert Greene's attack on Marlowe, to which Ribner refers, is, in its own way, a persuasive argument in favour of his authorship of *Selimus*, since this play would certainly seem to be a violent attack on the sort of ambition that Marlowe projects in his play. However, proof of authorship is not such an easy task, and I do not intend to

32. Harry Levin, *Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher* (London: Faber, 1965), p. 76.

33. *The Tragical Reign of Selimus 1594* (Malone Society Reprints, 1908). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

34. See Ribner, p. 162. Ribner states that the authorship of Robert Greene "is now generally conceded". However, A.P. Rossiter, for one, disagrees. See *Early English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1950), p. 169.

pursue this matter further. Whatever the authorship, it may be safely said that what *The Tragedy of Hoffman* is to the plays of revenge, *Selimus* is to the plays of ambition, since it is indeed "a sordid spectacle of one unnatural atrocity after another".³⁵

The play is based upon "the historical Selimus who rebelled in 1512 against his aged father, Sultan Bajazet II",³⁶ and the most outstanding evil of the play exists in the atrocity of the murders and mutilation and the sort of ambition that can impel men to act in such a way. A particular aspect of this kind of ambition is shown as its complete disregard for close blood ties. Selimus and Acomat are "unnatural" in the stance they take against their father, although both hypocritically accuse their father of unnatural behaviour to them, Selimus declaring himself as loyal (ℓ. 641) and Acomat as a loving son (ℓ. 1077), in spite of their attempts to seize their father's crown unlawfully. A similar sort of unnatural family behaviour occurs in *Gorbuduc* with which the play has some affinity. Mustaffa's advice to Bajazet to maintain firm control while he lives and to provide for a strong succession (ℓℓ. 1036-61) repeats much of Philander's advice to Gorbuduc.³⁷ The dilemma of old age and its concomitant inability to maintain strong and prudent control is a characteristic of both plays.

The political philosophy of *Selimus* is like that of *Tamburlaine* in that might is favoured rather than heredity. Although the loyal Mustaffa justly censures Selimus's early rebellion (ℓℓ. 890-904)

35. Cole. p. 100.

36. Jean Jacquot, "Raleigh's 'Hellish Verses' and the 'Tragical Raigne of Selimus'", *Modern Language Review*, 48 (1953), 5.

37. See *Gorbuduc* in *Tudor Plays*, ed. Edmund Creeth (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 383-442, ℓℓ. 181-246.

as unlawful and unmerited, yet he admits that he favours the warrior, Selimus, as Bajazet's successor. The reason that all favour Selimus, the youngest son, rather than Corcut, the legal heir, or Acomat, is clearly stated by Calisbassa:

. . . we would not Acomat
That leads his life still in lascivious pompe,
Nor Corcut, though he be a man of woorth,
Should be commander of our Empire.
For he that never saw his foe mans face,
Will scant endure to lead a souldiers life.
And he that never handled but his penne,
But being given to peace as Corcut is,
He never will enlarge the Empire
So that the rule and power over us,
Is onely fit for valiant Selimus.

(ll. 919-33)

Clearly an aggressive martial leader who will extend the empire is the ruler with full support, and it is to Selimus, who is such a warrior, that all turn, including Bajazet, when Acomat's rebellion reaches its cruellest peak. But it is a Bajazet who has no illusions about the eventual outcome for himself:

The worst that can befall me is but death,
That would end my wofull miserie.
Selimus he must worke me this good turne,
I cannot kill my selfe, hee'l do't for me.

(ll. 1529-32)

The play projects two images of a king. The one like a younger Bajazet, apparently legally assuming power, strong, just and successful in the field. The other is a Selimus or an Acomat, obsessed with ambition, and prepared to commit any crime to seize the crown. Granted that the shrewd Selimus has the crown given to him willingly enough by his father, but once his object has been attained, he is intent on eliminating all who might threaten his power. Both Selimus and Acomat are motivated by a lust for supreme

power. Excessive ambition is identified explicitly as the cause of the brothers' unnatural cruelty. The Aga attempts to warn Acomat:

O see my Lord, how fell ambition
Deceives your senses and bewitcyes you....

(ll. 1380-81)

Corcut also adds his accusation: "Damned ambition, cause of all miserie..." (l. 1912), and both the Aga and Corcut refer to both sons' plot to kill their father as "unkind" (ll. 1382, 1918), in the sense that such a crime is against the very nature of man. Hence "fell ambition" is portrayed as an evil that can cause man to deny his very nature. Although the same criticism of ambition can be gleaned from *Tamburlaine*, yet it is not specifically denounced in that play as it is in *Selimus*, but rather does Marlowe glorify it as one of man's most precious possessions. In *Selimus* it is significant, therefore, that Selimus should tell himself:

... unmaske thy selfe, and play thy part,
And manifest the heate of thy desire:
Nourish the coales of thine ambitious fire.

(ll. 232-34)

Even more so is Acomat's perversion of his humanity apparent in his cannibalistic vengeance-seeking against his father. He expresses his desire to "teare the old man peecemeale with my teeth,/And colour my strong hands with his gore-blood" (ll. 1378-79). It would seem to be apposite here to pay some attention to the sort of ruthless cruelty perpetrated by Selimus and Acomat. Compared to Acomat, Selimus may be seen as lacking in ingenious means for the disposal of his victims. In an almost offhand manner he coldly orders one strangulation after another with a poisoning providing the only variation to his theme. On the other hand, Acomat shows an unhealthy delight in devising diverse and extremely nasty methods for removing

his relatives and mutilating his victims. He threatens his young nephew that both he and his city must surrender or

You all shall die: and not a common death,
But even as monstrous as I can devise.

(ll. 1171-72)

With precise attention to the trend of the Aga's valiant opposition he allows the latter to suggest the manner of his own mutilation (ll. 1414, 1429), and then jests with him regarding his amputated hands: "Which hand is this? right? or left? canst thou tell?" (l. 1437). His behaviour exemplifies a sadism that is again apparent in his estimation of a king's highest tribute:

It is the greatest glorie of a king
When, though his subjects hate his wicked deeds
Yet are they forct to beare them all with praise.

(ll. 1385-87)

It is often presumptuous to assign the labels of Senecan and Machiavellian to protagonists' behaviour. However, it would seem that the dramatist in this play has used these labels to discriminate between the precise nature of the conduct of Acomat and Selimus, portraying the former as a Senecan tyrant and the latter as Machiavellian. The foregoing remarks of Acomat reveal a contempt for the manner in which his subjects regard him. Such an attitude and his statement that "Hate is peculiar to a princes state" (l. 1395) scarcely fit the prescripts of Machiavellian policy.³⁸ Acomat also displays much of the tyrant's ranting, irrational posture when he receives his father's rebuttal:

. . . . I am impatient of delaie,
And since my father hath incenst me thus,
Ile quench those kindled flames with his hart blood.
Not like a sonne, but a most cruell foe,
. . . .

38. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, introd. Max Lerner (New York: Random, 1950), pp. 60, 66.

My nephew Mahomet...
 . . . shall be the first
 Whom I will sacrifice unto my wrath.

(ll. 1108-18)

Acomat's lust for revenge at the alleged "monstrous iniurie" (l. 1153) inflicted by his father must be appeased by blood vengeance. His insatiable thirst for blood is reminiscent of the worst revenger or tyrant:

So Acomat, revenge still gnawes thy soule.
 I thinke my souldiers hands have bene too slow,
 In sheading blood, and murthring innocents.

(ll. 1345-47)

Inherent in all such irrational outbursts of the tyrant figure is the sense in which they regard themselves as gods who have the right to exact atonement in the form of blood sacrifice from all those who offend them. The ridiculously inflated nature of the cause which has made Acomat draw his "conquering blade" (l. 1155) is apparent to the audience, who should remember that he is the son who does not suit as successor because he "leads his life still in lascivious pompe" (l. 920). Whether or not the dramatist intended the savagery of his protagonists to act as a severe moral censure upon Marlowe's glorified conquering hero in *Tamburlaine*, it is surely undeniable that he was capitalising on the popularity of bloody spectacle to attract the audiences to his play.

Unlike Acomat, Selimus plots his accession to power with Machiavellian care and cunning. He is not blinded by the lust for blood which hampers Acomat and which excites the outraged response of all. It is this unanimous response that supplies Selimus with the occasion for making his bid for power:

Will fortune favour me yet once againe?
 And will she thrust the cards into my hands?

. . .

To deale about and shufle as I would:
 Let Selim never see the day-light spring,
 Unlesse I shuffle out my selfe a king.

(ll. 1539-44)

Fortune is not to be mastered as it is by Tamburlaine, but rather is she seen as providing Selimus with the opportunity to advance himself. In this respect Tamburlaine would seem to be more the Machiavellian figure.³⁹ Nevertheless, Selimus demonstrates a calculating restraint which makes a strong contrast with the methods of Acomat. Once Selimus has mastered power, he proceeds to safeguard it by removing all those who might pose any sort of threat to him (ll. 1680-1714).⁴⁰ When he has set his plans in motion he elaborates his Machiavellian-sounding philosophy:

. . . . I am none of those
 That make a conscience for to kill a man. 41
 For nothing is more hurtfull to a Prince,
 Then to be scrupulous and religious. 42

(ll. 1731-34)

To make the connection between Selimus and Machiavelli explicit, the dramatist has Selimus speak about proceeding "with Lyons force" and concealing his treachery "in a foxes skin" (ll. 1737-38).⁴³ On the whole, it would seem that the dramatist has been successful in delineating both his characters through the medium of the Senecan tyrant

39. See Machiavelli, p. 94.

40. This is sound Machiavellian policy. See Machiavelli, p. 35.

41. Compare ll. 1731-33 with 2. *Tamburlaine*, IV.i.27-28, where the reverse sentiment is expressed by Calyphas.

42. It is interesting to note the inconsistency of Selimus's atheistic views. Sounding like Faustus he tells Sinam that he does not believe in a heaven or a hell, but if there were a hell it would be a fair exchange for reigning over a Turkish empire (see ll. 419-34). Yet later he speaks of Corcut's "never dying soule" and an afterlife (ll. 2016-17).

43. Marlowe associates Tamburlaine with Machiavellian symbols rather more subtly. See *IT*, I.i.31; I.ii.52.

figure and the figure of the political realist, who knows how to use opportunity and traditional beliefs to his own advantage. In doing so he makes a two-pronged attack on the evil of obsessive ambition, denouncing its savagery through the Senecan Acomat, and its ruthlessness through the Machiavellian Selimus.

Like *Tamburlaine*, *Selimus* ends with its conqueror triumphant and unchastened, but it does not do so without reservations. Certainly, the epilogue sets out to entice a following for the second part of the play promising "greater murders" to come, but the play, as it stands, conveys warnings which may be taken to foreshadow the eventual outcome. Sinam warns an unheeding Selimus that "there is a hell and a revenging God" (l. 418), and more intriguingly dramatic still is Corcut's prophecy:

Selim in Chiurlu didst thou set upon
Our aged father in his sodaine flight:
In Chiurlu shalt thou die a greevous death.
And if thou wilt not change thy greedie mind,
Thy soule shall be tormented in darke hell....

(ll. 2163-67)

Corcut, who has been impressed with Christian teachings, also expresses the familiar idea that God allows even the wicked to prosper for a time, so that they might have the opportunity to reform their lives (ll. 2142-51). Bevington makes the comment that:

Selimus ... although more denunciatory of the
Marlovian hero, again loses its way between
unreconciled appeals to Senecan sensationalism
and to pretentious morality.⁴⁴

While I would agree with him in regard to the effect of Senecan sensationalism on the play, I do not think that the morality is necessarily pretentious. Rather does it inject a brief, but ominous,

44. David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 221.

note of uncertainty about the future, which has some dramatic merit when measured against the predominantly violent action of the play. However, although the dramatist is intent on censuring Marlovian ambition, he cannot resist the temptation of indulging in Marlovian flights of poetics in praise of high-reaching aspiration when Selimus says:

But we, whose minde in heavenly thoughts is clad,
Whose bodie doth a glorious spirit beare,
That hath no bounds, but flieth every where.
Why should we seeke to make that soule a slave,
To which dame Nature so large freedome gave.

(ll. 349-53)

But the scattered appearance of such poetical achievement in *Selimus* does not have the effect of making the morality of the play seem equivocal as is the case with *Tamburlaine*. The dominating Senecan sensationalism, unambiguous censure, and a dramatist who is more conventional in his methods than Marlowe is, ensures this.

From an ambition that seeks to fulfil itself in martial conquest and the amassing of kingdoms, we turn now to a predominantly intellectual ambition in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1592).⁴⁵ Yet both *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus* share in the soaring poetical scope of their lines which matches the high reaches of an ambition which seeks to extend beyond the limits of human capacities. Both plays are concerned with the relationship of man to God and posit "a secondary scale of values that works against the primary scale".⁴⁶ Unlike *Tamburlaine*, *Faustus* does not see himself as an agent of God, but rather does he seek to set himself up in defiance of God, requiring the services of God's enemy, Mephistophilis, to achieve his ambition.

45. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1971). All quotations cited are from this edition.

46. J.B. Steane, *Intro.*, *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 27.

Hence the specific evils which are exemplified by Faustus's conduct are the presumptuous pride that motivates him and shapes his nature, his blind and arrogant ambition, his deliberate pact with the devil which entails the bartering of his soul for knowledge and his renunciation of God, and finally and importantly, the evil of despair.

While *Doctor Faustus* has many features that resemble the morality plays, Marlowe develops his hero's situation with far greater tragic and dramatic impact than any Morality writer.⁴⁷ Faustus's desire for knowledge and power, his deliberate confrontation and parleying with the embodiment of all evils, his tortured inner conflict and suffering when faced with an awesome and inescapable destiny, as well as his tragic fatalism - all these are conveyed with that very special intensity which is peculiar to Marlowe's study of evil and suffering.⁴⁸ The power with which Marlowe projects Faustus's torment is surely capable of producing a response from the audience (or reader) that is far more deeply felt than that which the stereotyped Morality play could arouse.

The nature of Faustus's ambition is defined with a detailed and reasoned precision that is absent from the other plays of ambition discussed here, and from the description of the evils that motivate the protagonists of the tyrant and revenge plays. Faustus is prompted by an intellectual curiosity, suited to his training, rather than by an unreasoning passion and therefore his choice of action may be seen

47. In common with the Morality play, Marlowe's play depicts a central mankind figure whose soul is the objective of the forces of good and evil. *The Castle of Perseverance* (c.1350-1399) featured a good and bad angel and the Seven Deadly Sins.

48. Faustus's torment and that of Edward in *Edward 11* are the most outstanding examples of this aspect of Marlowe's work.

as more culpable. Once he has made his decision, he follows his course with reckless abandon, it is true, but this is attributable to intellectual pride and moral blindness rather than to irrational and heated passion. When he turns to the scriptures, his inefficient reading of the texts, which ignores the full context and therefore their accurate meaning, betrays that facet of his intellect and imagination which will later prove deaf to the warnings of Mephistophilis and to the promises of Christ's mercy. The portion of the texts⁴⁹ which Faustus quotes projects the strictly legal aspects of a heavenly justice - the crime and its punishment - the rigidity of which is perhaps what Faustus's teaching has best equipped him to understand. The complementary mitigating rider is completely ignored. In fact, Faustus may later call on Christ's mercy in fear and desperation, but his intellectual pride is an obstacle to a full comprehension of the meaning of mercy.⁵⁰ Pride and the acceptance of mercy are not really compatible. This shortcoming in Faustus's perception is demonstrated to some extent in the sorts of antics in which he indulges in the much-derided central section of the play, particularly in the episode with the horse-courser (XV. 1-42). And so a cleavage is perceptible in Faustus's intellect where Faustus takes heed only of that which he considers will best suit his purpose. Cole comments on the sophistic manner in which Faustus dismisses the Bible. He sees it as merely "an excuse for Faustus to turn to his true

49. Romans 6.23, 1 John 1.8.

50. See Robert Ornstein, "The Comic Synthesis in *Doctor Faustus* (1955)", in *Marlowe: Doctor Faustus*, ed. John Jump (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 171, footnote. Ornstein compares Faustus and Ivan Karamazov:

Both rebel against God because they cannot believe in His redeeming love; and they cannot believe because they are detached, superior beings incapable of ordinary human sympathies. Both reject intellectually what they cannot emotionally 'conceive of' and accept.

aspiration", namely that of necromancy.⁵¹ This aspect of Faustus's behaviour is demonstrated by his attitude to the advice from the Good and Bad Angels. When the Good Angel warns him to forsake the necromantic book in favour of the Scriptures, it is as if Faustus does not hear, but when the Bad Angel speaks of the powers promised by "that famous art" (1.73), Faustus takes up the words unfalteringly, they are in such complete accord. The apparent split in Faustus's makeup is largely a moral blindness caused by a presumptuous pride intent not so much on challenging God as defying and ignoring Him.

While Faustus may sound like Tamburlaine when he talks of getting a deity (1.62) and reigning as "Sole king of all our provinces" (1.93), yet his ambition is distinguished by its boundless intellectual curiosity in a way that is peculiar to Faustus and foreign to Tamburlaine: ⁵²

I'll have them read me strange philosophy
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings....

(1. 85-86)

This curiosity is continued in his questioning of Mephistophilis:

Come, Mephostophilis, let us dispute again,
And reason of divine astrology.

(V1. 33-34)

Yet this knowledge is to be the means to a power which has many of the connotations of the infinite:

O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command....

(1. 52-56)

51. See Cole, p. 198.

52. See J.C. Maxwell, "The Sin of Faustus", in *Marlowe: Doctor Faustus*, ed. John Jump (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 92-94. Maxwell draws attention to the theme of curiosity in the play, and adds that it is not confined to Faustus only.

Faustus's defiance of God is illustrated in the way that he denounces God and substitutes Satan as the alternative object for his homage. His maxim: "Despair in God, and trust in Beelzebub" (V.5), and his proclamation that he will build "an altar and a church" to Satan both signify the idea of a deified devil, and the parody that follows highlights such an interpretation:

... Mephostophilis, come,
And bring glad tidings from great Lucifer.
Is't not midnight? ...
Veni, veni, Mephostophilis! ⁵³

(V. 27-30)

Marlowe takes meticulous care to demonstrate the deliberate nature of the choice that Faustus makes. He is not deceived by a disguised Vice as is the case with many of the Morality protagonists, for as Cole rightly points out "Faustus is his own destroyer".⁵⁴ No devil appears to entice him, but rather does Faustus deliberately set about learning the means by which he can conjure up the devil. He recognizes the gravity of what he is about to do: "... I'll conjure though I die therefor" (1. 165). Certain that it is he who is orchestrating this daring relationship with the prince of darkness, Faustus is delighted that a "pliant" Mephistophilis answers his magic spells, apparently ready to perform his every wish. But Mephistophilis is quick to disillusion him on this score:

... when we hear one rack the name of God,
Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,
We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;
Nor will we come unless he use such means
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd.

(111. 49-53)

What Faustus is most certainly orchestrating is his own downfall,

53. These lines have obvious associations with the religious aspects of the Christmas festival.

54. Cole, p. 241.

for Mephistophilis's statement is a clear affirmation of man's free will. Much later the devil explains that it was he who misled Faustus in his reading of the scriptures (XIX.93-96), and although this may seem to inject a note of pessimism into the play regarding the chances man has to direct the course of his own life, it really only explains the temptation with which man must cope. It is within this area that man must exercise his ability to choose for good or for evil.

The themes of free will and pride are very closely knit by Marlowe and they must play a vital part in any estimation of Faustus's culpability. Both are brilliantly illustrated in the ironic exchange between Faustus and Mephistophilis regarding the existence of hell. When Mephistophilis appears, Faustus is confident that his abjuration of God has provided him with all the qualifications for commerce with Satan, and he assures Mephistophilis that he is not afraid of the word "'damnation'" since hell and Elysium are all one to him (111.61-62). He asks the devil about Lucifer and is told that the latter's sin against God was one of "aspiring pride and insolence" (111.70), which is itself an ironic indictment of Faustus's own sin, but such implications completely escape Faustus. When he recalls the past joys of heaven and the constant torment of hell, Mephistophilis is suddenly moved to cry out in anguish:

O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul.

(111. 83-84)

Again Faustus is unimpressed and taunts Mephistophilis with his faintheartedness:

Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.

(111. 87-88)

What a world of irony is contained within these lines when one considers the awesome suffering ahead of Faustus. Indeed, it is as Ornstein says, that Marlowe possessed a

disenchanted view of the aspiring mind - the
knowledge that the Comic Spirit hovers over the
Icarian flight of the self-announced superman.⁵⁵

In spite of the ominous implications of Mephistophilis's information Faustus delightedly envisages the splendid vistas before him, saying very deliberately:

Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.

(111. 104-05)

In the English Faust book this discussion between the devil and Faustus takes place after Faustus has signed the contract with Lucifer.⁵⁶ Marlowe's alteration to the placing of this episode and to much of what is said shows his clear intention of highlighting the culpability and blind arrogance of Faustus.⁵⁷ Even the description of hell which Mephistophilis gives to Faustus (V.120-27) makes no impression on him, nor does the assurance that Faustus will "of necessity" be damned (V.131). Haughtily he says:

Think'st thou that Faustus is so fond to imagine
That after this life there is any pain?
No, these are trifles and mere old wives' tales.

(V. 134-36)

It is indeed a horrifying indictment of Faustus's arrogant pride that he should assume a loftier understanding of hell than Mephistophilis,

55. Ornstein, p. 172.

56. The legend of the man who sold his soul to Satan appeared in the "Volksbuch" published at Frankfurt in 1587. This was translated into English as *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* 1592 by "P.F." and is considered to be the main source for Marlowe's play.

57. See Cole, p. 203.

whose knowledge is based on experience rather than grounded in the classics which enables Faustus to confound hell in Elysium:

Fau. I think hell's a fable.

Meph. Ay, think so still, till experience change thy mind.

(V. 128-29)

The good doctor seems reassured by the devil's description of a limitless hell (V.122) and by his ability to walk about and converse. This blindness prevents him from speculating about the precise destination of his own soul upon the expiration of twenty-four years.

The tragic irony implicit in Faustus's lofty assumption that he is better equipped to understand eschatological matters than the devil is repeated in the quality of his contract with Lucifer. At tremendous cost to himself, his unholy alliance yields him "only shreds of encyclopedic fact" and "unheroic material triumphs".⁵⁸ When he embarks on his disastrous course it is because, in spite of all his learned accomplishments, he can only say: "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" (1.23). Yet after some years, measured theatrically by the trivial feats of the central scenes, all he can say is: "What are thou, Faustus, but a man condemn'd to die?" (XV.21). He is now reduced to a humanity stripped of all its glorious potential both the humanly possible and the superhumanly impossible. He is certainly deluded in the pact he makes with the devil, but, unlike Everyman, he is self-deluded. Inordinate pride blinds him and places him on the path to damnation far more disastrously than foolish naivety endangers Everyman.

Clearly Marlowe is investigating the factors that determine man's direction in life - his freedom of choice and the dominant

58. Farnham, p. 402.

personal characteristics that determine that choice. There is a third factor which normally plays an important role, that of the circumstances outside man's control. In *Doctor Faustus*, however, Marlowe keeps his focus centred upon the man and his makeup. If we attribute the extent of his pride to his wide learning, the learning may be taken into account as a contributing cause of his dilemma, but it is likely that Faustus's inordinately aspiring mind reveals pride as an integral part of his nature. In any case, his learning should provide him with the ability to reason, which, in turn, should act to counter-balance his intellectual pride. In *Doctor Faustus* Marlowe depicts the reasoning of his protagonist as continually swayed by excessive pride and ambition. Even when he has the occasional glimpse of reality: "The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite" (V.11), he thrusts this truth aside with extravagant visions of wealth and power. Importantly, Marlowe shows Faustus as deliberately manipulating circumstances, when he sets out to learn the secrets of necromancy so that he can conjure up the devil.

In spite of the very wilful manner in which Faustus summons forth evil forces, and the sense in which the play suggests an evil presence ever-ready to take advantage of man's waywardness, yet there is an ever-present impression of benevolent forces at work in the world that Marlowe projects. At the height of his temptation, Faustus speaks of a voice in his ears warning: "'Abjure this magic, turn to God again!'" (V.8), and during the signing of the pact with the devil, Faustus's blood congeals and when it flows again, the inscription "*homo fuge*" (V.62, 76-77) appears on his arm. The congealing of blood does not take place in the English Faust book, so by adding this detail Marlowe extends and emphasizes the warning that

Faustus receives.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Faustus is determined to proceed, even blasphemously sealing the bargain with the verbal "*Consummatum est*".⁶⁰ This is again an addition of Marlowe's, and as his own insertion it surely reveals the dramatist's wish that Faustus should be seen as very much aware of the nature of the consent he gives to his act. His pert "*consummatum est*" would seem to be indicative of a man who has a liking for a smart quip with an ingenious association.⁶¹ Once again it is perhaps the "jaunty hocus-pocus" behaviour of the central scenes that makes a comment on this aspect of his character.⁶²

Until the signing of the pact with Lucifer these appeals to Faustus to abandon his chosen course are of a cautionary nature, but once the contract is signed, he is constantly exhorted to repent. He does have one opportunity before this to renege on his contract. When he signs the pact, the warning "*homo fuge*" appears on his arm, he hesitates, and Mephistophilis acts swiftly to divert his attention:

59. Jump rightly notes this addition by Marlowe. See his footnote, p. 29. However Boas remarks that these details of the play "are closely based on the *English Faust Book*". Frederick S. Boas, *Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), p. 210. The following is the relevant excerpt from the *Faust Book*:

... Faustus, in giving his Soul to the Devil: and to confirm it the more assuredly, he took a small penknife, and pricked a vein in his left hand, and for certainty thereupon, were seen on his hand these words written, as if they had been written in blood, *O homo fuge*: whereat the Spirit vanished, but Faustus continued in his damnable mind, and made his writing as followeth. [Chapter VI follows with the conditions that Faustus stipulates.] See *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus 1592*. Mod. and ed. William Rose (London: Routledge, n.d.), p. 75.

60. See John 19.30. These are the words Christ speaks on the cross.

61. Mahood says that these words are spoken by a Faustus who may be experiencing some pangs of remorse, but that, nevertheless, he speaks them "as a Satanic parody of another deed of blood - the Crucifixion" - which was the promise of divine mercy to man. See M.M. Mahood, "Marlowe's Heroes" in *Elizabethan Drama*, ed. R.J. Kaufman (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 108-09.

62. Harry Levin, p. 143. This is how Levin describes Faustus's conduct as an Epicurean reaping the dubious rewards of his contract.

"Enter Devils, *giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus*". The dangerous moment passes, because Faustus, distracted at the sight of the devils, asks: "But may I raise such spirits when I please?" (V.86). Being reassured that he will have that power, he then passes the scroll to Mephistophilis: "A deed of gift of body and of soul" (V.89). This is Faustus's sin - a deliberate giving of his soul to Satan - which sets the seal on his repudiation of God.⁶³ The fact that Faustus is now exhorted frequently to repent emphasizes that this is the major sin, a sin of betrayal and deliberate choice for evil, for which forgiveness is essential. Faustus himself is never in doubt concerning the sin he has committed. Although he speaks of renouncing magic (VI.11), and the Old Man implores him to "leave this damned art,/This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell" (XVIII. 38-39), Faustus clearly articulates the nature of his sin to the scholars:

Fau. ... Lucifer and Mephostophilis. Ah, gentlemen, I gave them my soul for my cunning!

....

Fau. God forbade it, indeed; but Faustus hath done it. For the vain pleasure of four-and-twenty years hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity. I writ them a bill with mine own blood....

(XIX. 61-67)

The sins that follow are also deliberate and carry Faustus further towards damnation, but they are closely associated with the demands he makes on Mephistophilis as part of their unholy alliance.

It is important to recognize the fact that the continual urging of Faustus to repent is also a sign that his sins must be pardonable. The constant diversionary tactics of Mephistophilis as

63. Boas seems to have difficulty recognizing the act that calls for repentance from Faustus. See Boas, p. 211. See also Lily B. Campbell, "Doctor Faustus": A Case of Conscience", *PMLA*, LXV11 (1952), 219-39.

mentioned earlier, and particularly the parade of the seven Deadly Sins, is evidence that the devils know that they have need to guard their bargain.⁶⁴ Damnation does not "of necessity" follow Faustus's sin. His eventual despair is the ultimate sin which blocks the granting of God's mercy and forgiveness, and therefore, effectively damns him.⁶⁵ Farnham says that "Faustus is really damned because, although he has the nobility to aspire toward true wisdom, he nevertheless allows himself to snatch at the counterfeit".⁶⁶ Farnham's comment seems to concentrate on the aesthetic aspects of Faustus's enterprise rather than the essentially religious implications of his actions. Certainly Faustus has the ability to aspire to worthwhile knowledge, as the Epilogue tells us: "Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight" (1.1). The fact that he betrays this potential within himself is due to excessive pride and sheer, extravagant ambition, which blind him to a real understanding of the consequences. He suffers destruction as do all those protagonists who allow immoderate ambition or passion to rule their actions unchecked, and as they lose that particular essence of their nature which makes them human, so does Faustus cry in terror at his inescapable destiny:

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?

O soul, be chang'd into little water drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found.

(XIX. 172-86)

The tragic irony of this situation - and such is the implication of the Epilogue - is that man is endowed with the very possession that

64. See Jump's Introduction to edition of the play used here, p. lii.

65. See Lily B. Campbell, pp. 219-39.

66. Farnham, p. 404.

has the potential to lift him to the heights or lure him to destruction. But the play goes beyond this to show that such destruction is really self-inflicted. At all times Marlowe shows Faustus as dominated by pride but yet exercising his own choice most deliberately. The irony here is that he feels that he is giving expression to his dearest ambition, but in reality, pride, that integral part of his nature, is directing his course. If looked at in terms of the Morality play, or in terms of the revenge and tyrant plays, the lesson to be learnt is that man must control the unruly elements in his nature which lead him to ruin, or more explicitly, self-ruin. But in terms of Renaissance thought, within which it is more appropriate to consider Marlowe, it is more accurate to recognize that while the dramatist is looking at problems that have always faced men - yet he is looking at a more complex and self-sufficient man, whose destiny is not assured. The result, particularly in this play, is that in spite of the humanist ideal, man's claim to self-sufficiency is flawed. It is flawed because it is a supposition which is based on a humanity that is in itself imperfect. The continual ironies within *Doctor Faustus* highlight the pitfalls to which man's belief in his self-sufficiency is vulnerable. Faustus's pride is his besetting fault - his "spiritual sin" - which blinds him in regard to the ultimate course he is taking, but it is his extreme curiosity, in particular, that seems to broaden the scope of his sinning and prolong his realization of the futility and worthlessness of his contract.⁶⁷

Although pride and curiosity may be the major contributing factors to Faustus's initial fall, it is pride and, to a lesser extent, guilt which causes Faustus to commit the ultimate sin of despair

67. Maxwell says that it is "curiosity which links the intellectual and sensual aspects of Faustus's sin". See Maxwell, p. 92.

which prevents him from repenting and from trusting in God's forgiveness. Pride is therefore that facet of his character, that tragic flaw, which causes his moral blindness, his disposition towards overweening ambition, and that

sense of his own greatness [which persists] in the form of belief that his sins are too large and terrible to be forgiven even by God. Man the sinner is still greater than God the forgiver. 68

This sense of the greatness of his sin and his denial of God's power to exceed his own conception of him is underlined in his extravagant claim: "... the serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus" (XIX.41-42). The mind that could only heed or comprehend the rigid letter of the law in the scriptural passages can now only envisage a wrathful Old Testament God:

. . . see where God
Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows.
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

(XIX. 150-53)

Marlowe demonstrates his remarkable ability to convey intense suffering when Faustus, at last fully aware of his inescapable fate, cries out in an agony of loss and remorse:

Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.

(XIX. 133-35)

The movement of the lines begins to rise in a great crescendo and then diminishes:

68. Alvin Kernan, "The Entrance to Hell: the New Tragedy" in *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. 111, 1576-1613*, eds. Clifford Leech and T.W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 349. Jump thinks that it is Faustus's intercourse with a devil - the sin of demoniality - that "plunges him into irremediable despair". See Introduction, p. lv.

O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?
 See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
 One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ! -

(XIX. 133-47)

Marlowe conveys just how close Faustus comes to repentance, but remembering the threats of Mephistophilis, Faustus redirects his prayer in terror to Lucifer: "O, spare me, Lucifer!" The change is instantaneous. It is as if another picture has flashed across the sky and the wrath of the Old Testament God replaces the hope of Christ's mercy. But the change is due to Faustus's failure to sustain his act of repentance and to his turning instead to Lucifer for mercy.⁶⁹ This act recalls his earlier decision to "Despair in God, and trust in Beelzebub" (V.5). It is indeed as if the way to repentance is "damn'd up" (XIX.94). But it is Faustus himself who is the obstacle to his own salvation. He lacks the trust and faith in God that the Old Man has which puts the latter beyond the power of Satan. Because Marlowe does not depict the devils as physically restraining Faustus, it is reasonable to assume that he wants this facet of Faustus's behaviour to be emphasized. Undoubtedly an important element in his failure to trust in God's mercy is his own realization of the gravity and wilfulness of his sins and his own inclination to understand stern rather than merciful justice.⁷⁰

Levin says that Marlowe's play seems to express "the conviction of sin without the belief in salvation".⁷¹ And while this is true of Faustus himself, surely Marlowe keeps the idea of salvation before Faustus and the audience throughout the play, in the advice

69. See footnote, p.101 in edition of this play being used for discussion.

70. This is apparent in the confession he makes to the scholars. See XIX.61-67. Campbell also refers to the pangs of conscience which Faustus suffers, p. 223.

71. Levin, p. 157.

of the Good Angel, the Old Man and the scholars. And it is not the impossible ideal, but a realizable goal which Faustus, for all his aspirations, has not the ability to reach. The most moving lines in the play are spoken by Faustus when he strains towards a merciful God and seems to come so near. Marlowe makes it clear that it is Faustus himself who breaks this contact when he turns to Lucifer for mercy. It is not a divine reaction that spurns his repentance and refuses mercy. For the same reason Ribner's statement that "there is no emphasis upon the goodness of the religious system he rejects" would seem to lack substance.⁷² The reassuring alternative is potent in the words of the Old Man when a despairing Faustus is handed a dagger by the obliging Mephistophilis:

O, stay, good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps!
 I see an angel hovers o'er thy head
 And with a vial full of precious grace
 Offers to pour the same into thy soul:
 Then call for mercy, and avoid despair.

(XV111. 60-65)

And Faustus senses the truth behind these words when he replies: "O friend, I feel/Thy words to comfort my distressed soul" (11.65-66). Man's ability to exercise free will is again most clear. As he deliberately chooses sin, it is up to him to take the necessary steps to secure mercy through repentance. Perhaps the most reassuring words about the security of faith and the availability of salvation to the faithful man are spoken by Mephistophilis, when an ungrateful but fearful Faustus urges the devil to punish the Old Man:

His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;
 But what I may afflict his body with
 I will attempt, which is but little worth.

(XV111. 87-89)

72. Irving Ribner, *The English History Play* (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 128.

This statement is itself a glaring accusation of Faustus's fear of bodily pain and of his subservience to the devil.

There is another important instance within the play which reveals Marlowe's intention of highlighting the availability of mercy and salvation to sinning man. This is in the carefully selected scriptural passages which are his own addition to the story of Doctor Faustus, as they do not occur in the English Faust Book in this form, although it would seem that Marlowe has taken the hint from

... and thus they [Faustus and his boy] lived an odious life in the sight of God....It must be so, for their fruits be none other: as Christ saith through John, where he calls the Devil a thief, and a murderer....⁷³

Apart from the poetics and the general movement of the play, these and other alterations and expansions to the source material, already mentioned, clearly convey Marlowe's intention to depict sin and suffering with great intensity, but to depict them against an ever-present sense of mercy and salvation. Moreover, the "*poena damni*", which he allows Faustus to express so poignantly, highlights the goodness of the religious system which he rejects and therefore loses.

The last play in this chapter to focus on lawless ambition and its associated evils is *Arden of Faversham* (1588-91),⁷⁴ which is regarded as the first and the best of a new genre in this period known as "domestic tragedy".⁷⁵ The plot is based upon a forty-year-old crime which was recorded in Holinshed's *Chronicle* and the Wardmote Book of Faversham. The playwright, whose identity is not

73. *The History of the Damnable Life*, p. 80.

74. *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. M.L. Wine (London: Methuen, 1973). All references to the text are from this edition.

75. Farnham, p. 398.

known,⁷⁶ follows the more detailed Holinshed account closely, expanding and compressing the source material when he sees fit.⁷⁷ The play is remarkable for its

bold experiment in portraying the passions of ordinary Englishmen in the setting of contemporary society and in language appropriate to the characters and theme - and it does so without romanticizing the characters or turning them into moral exemplars.⁷⁸

The epilogue draws attention to the realism of the play describing it as "naked tragedy" concerned with conveying the "simple truth".

Unlike the foregoing plays, and even those of Marlowe, who is so frequently criticized for omitting the conventional moralizing, *Arden* does not include a prologue or epilogue which explains a moral lesson.⁷⁹ Entirely ignoring a prologue, the epilogue resembles the modern form, simply tidying up the loose ends and inviting attention to the sparse realism of the play. Instead of moralizing the dramatist is concerned to develop the characterization of all those involved with the murder, and clarification of motivation is an important element of this process.

The evils depicted are those of murder, infidelity and unlawful ambition, and the offenders are prompted by obsessive passion and desire for material advancement. The opening lines of the play immediately draw attention to Arden's preoccupation with the accumulation of land, and so establish the historical background against which

76. The play has been variously ascribed to Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare. See Introduction of this edition of play, pp. lxxxi-xcii.

77. Introduction, pp. xxxviii-xxxix. For account of crime and events leading up to it, see Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Vol. 11, 2nd ed. (New York: AMS press, 1976), pp. 1062-66.

78. Introduction, p. lxxxi.

79. Wine draws attention to the misleading wording of the original title-page, and adds that the "tone of the play belies this facile and melodramatic description". See Introduction, p. lx.

the events of the play are set. When Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, church lands became readily available to those with the means of procuring them. No longer were class barriers the deterrent to land acquisition, but anyone with the financial backing, or a keenness for sharp-dealing was able to procure land, and land ownership became the means by which men from all classes could rise in the social scheme of things.⁸⁰ In *Tamburlaine* and *Selimus*, the conquerors are favoured because they are empire builders, and within the lesser, social scale of *Arden*, man is respected in proportion to his ownership of land. Hence the multiplication of land assets, whether on an imperial or personal scale, is an ambition which has the potential to excite that ignoble propensity in man to hoard and accumulate.⁸¹

In *Arden of Faversham* it is Arden who has the wealth and social status to give him the advantage in the acquisition of land, and the complaints of both Greene and Reede would suggest that he is not above sharp practice. His social advantages would seem to put him above the law in this respect, whereas a man like Mosby, a tailor and what Arden contemptuously calls a "base-minded peasant" (1.323), chooses to resort to cunning and intrigue, or even murder, to succeed. Greene - allegedly religious, "A Man ... of great devotion" (1.586-87) - is so incensed at the land deals of Arden which impinge on his rights, that he readily accedes to Alice's requests to hire assassins to murder her husband: "For I had rather die than lose my land", he says (1.518). Even the manservant, Michael, who may be seen as conscience-stricken and fearful of his life in regard to his involvement in the plot to murder Arden, is, nevertheless, also shown

80. See R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1961), p. 148.

81. Cf. the naive Everyman or the cynical Volpone in this respect.

(perhaps inconsistently) as prepared to murder in order to acquire land:

For I will rid mine elder brother away,
And then the farm of Bolton is mine own.

(1. 172-73)

The moral climate of *Arden* is, therefore, a dark one. The breakdown of the established hierarchical system - itself not an evil - is shown, nevertheless, as encouraging a new direction for man's avaricious tendencies. The moral standards that are being inverted are shown as enveloping men from all walks of life. Particularly in Mosby's case is ambition to acquire land shown as closely allied to the desire to rise socially, and class distinction is a theme that pervades much of the play. It is present in Alice's angry retaliation against Mosby when he speaks of ending their association:

. . . Base peasant, get thee gone,
For what hast thou to countenance my love,
Being descended of a noble house
And matched already with a gentleman,...

(1. 198-203)

It is again clear in Arden's angry outburst against Mosby, which reveals the wealthy man's jealousy as well as his contempt for the social pretensions of a peasant:

A botcher . . .
Who, by base brokage getting some small stock,
Crept into service of a nobleman,
And by his servile flattery and fawning
Is now become the steward of his house,
And bravely jets it in his silken gown.

(1. 25-30)

Surely the picturesqueness of these lines conveys a comprehensive visual image of the social-climbing methods available to one such as Mosby. The image is completed in Mosby's endeavour to succeed to

"Arden's seat" (V111.31). When Arden savagely confronts Mosby and accuses him of dallying with his wife, contempt towards the socially inferior is illustrated with a greater dramatic significance since one of Arden's taunts is to emerge again in the climatic scene. Arden snatches away Mosby's sword:

So, sirrah, you may not wear a sword!
 The statute makes against artificers.
 Now use your bodkin,
 Your Spanish needle, and your pressing iron....

(1. 310-13)

Mosby demonstrates how far the sting of these humiliating words has penetrated when he later stabs Arden, saying: "There's for the pressing iron you told me of" (XIV.235).

The stark and strenuously calculated murder of Arden represents the greatest evil in the play. It is planned from the beginning, so that most of the action is concerned to bring about his death. In fact, it would seem that the plan has been uppermost in the minds of Alice and Mosby before the action of the play commences, as Alice reminds Mosby: "... did we not both/Decree to murder Arden in the night?" (1.192-93). Neither experience any difficulty in finding willing accomplices for the deed, but in spite of the purposeful planning, the murderous deed is hampered by a series of incredible coincidences, six in number.⁸² Bradbrook complains that the audience suffers irritation at these delays, but I think that the dramatist has used the prolongation of the murder in ways that contribute to the merit of the play.⁸³ There is of course the obvious comic relief of the antics that are enacted by the rascals, Black Will and Shakebag. It is also the thwarted attempts of these two villains to

82. Incredible they might seem, but they are factual and chronicled by Holinshed. Part of the fascination with the crime seems, understandably, to have been due to them.

83. See Bradbrook, p. 41.

commit murder that draws attention to the manner in which a sense of providential intervention is injected into the play. The conspirators themselves express an awareness that chance seems to favour Arden.

When four attempts upon Arden's life have failed, Shakebag says:

Arden, thou hast wondrous holy luck.
Did ever man escape as thou hast done?

(1X. 133-34)

When Greene learns of Arden's fourth escape from death, he exclaims: "The Lord of Heaven hath preserved him" (1X.142). Although Will's brusque rejoinder: "The Lord of Heaven a fig! The Lord Cheyne hath preserved him" restores the naturalistic temper of the play, the two consecutive references to a higher moral order do make some impact. Later this is repeated when Arden survives a sixth attempt, and Will⁸⁴ says: "... doubtless, he is preserved by miracle" (XV.28-29). As an extension of this idea of the presence of a higher moral order, the delays may also be interpreted as opportunities granted to the plot-⁸⁵ters to recognize the error of their ways. The fact that this does not happen, but that in spite of troubled consciences, each conspirator more determinedly pursues the victim's death, highlights the guilt of the offenders. Moreover, the way in which the actual murder would appear doomed to take place within the Arden home has a justice of its own. Because of it both Alice and Mosby are brought to give physical expression to their capacity for violence and evil by their active participation in the murder. That the murder violates the sanctity of the home rather than some distant London locality helps

84. See Sarah Youngblood, "Arden of Faversham", *Studies in English Literature*, 111 (1963), 213. Youngblood cites other examples of religious imagery as well, and finds that this contributes to "the theme of moral violation".

85. See Introduction, p. lxxvii. See also *Selimus*, ll. 2142-51, where a similar idea is pronounced by Corcut.

to fulfil Reede's curse, but more importantly, it is the location of the crime and the active participation of the lovers that serve to incriminate the chief offenders. Looked at in this way the sense of a higher moral order is strengthened.⁸⁶ It is when human intervention occurs that the innocent Bradshaw suffers with the guilty.

Wine rightly observes that the long postponement of Arden's murder allows the dramatist the opportunity to display the main characters with psychological penetration.⁸⁷ Will and Shakebag are stock villain characters ready to murder a mother for money, and they also represent a danger to civil order in their desire that well-paid murder might become a full-time occupation "without danger of law" (11.105-08). However, the dramatist uses these rascals to provide frequent comic relief, macabre though it might be at times, and their continued presence in the play instils an ominous insistence that murder is very much the subject of the drama.

Ascending the social scale, Greene, reputedly a religious man, demonstrates a tenacity to persevere in evil, and since his grievance against Arden concerns the latter's assimilation of his land, the degree to which this sort of material possession determines the characters of the play assumes serious proportions. In this particular instance, the dramatist could be seen to be focussing on the confused or inverted values of the religious man's capacity to justify certain aspects of his land deals in this period.⁸⁸ Greene seems to think that a desire for revenge in the form of murder is warrantable because

86. There is also the sense of a supernatural order in Franklin's presentiment of evil (1X.66-67) and in Arden's dream (VI.19).

87. See Introduction, p. lxxv.

88. See Tawney, pp. 119-20.

Arden of Faversham
 Hath highly wronged me about the Abbey land,
 That no revenge but death will serve the turn.

(11. 92-94)

It might be argued that textual confusion is the reason for the inconsistency with which Michael is depicted.⁸⁹ It is true that Michael subverts the murderers' plan to kill Arden in Scene IV and that his actions at other times in relation to his master's death, argue a troubled conscience and fear of reprisal against himself. However, there is a considerable degree of inconsistency if we do not ignore his willingness to kill his brother for land (1.172-73), and his professed readiness to poison Mistress Arden "for fear she'll tell" of her husband's murder (XIV.294-96). By what criteria are we to take such talk as mere foolish bravado?

The character of Arden is very difficult to assess for as Wine correctly points out: "almost any statement about him can be contradicted".⁹⁰ His contemptuous attitude towards Mosby is understandable because the latter is commonly known to be conducting a none too clandestine love affair with his wife. He enlists the audience's sympathy because he shows every proof that he loves his wife. He is always ready to pardon Alice and blame Mosby.⁹¹ When he comes upon them deliberately parading their affection in order that he might be lured into a fight in which he is meant to be killed, his anger is soon directed at Mosby only. When the lovers' plan misfires (yet again) and it is Mosby who is wounded, Alice has no difficulty in persuading Arden that the intimate scene was nothing but a little

89. See Introduction, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

90. Introduction, p. lxix.

91. See Louis Gillet, "Arden of Feversham" in *Shakespeare's Contemporaries*, eds. Max Bluestone and Norman Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 152.

innocent merriment. Arden apologizes abjectly and hastens to Mosby to make amends:

Then pardon me, sweet Alice, and forgive this fault.

Impose me penance, and I will perform it....

(X111. 117-19)

As Gillet comments: "he asks nothing more than to be convinced; his affection blinds him".⁹² Yet it is perhaps his earnest desire to preserve some sort of stability in his marriage that motivates him, that he is not so much blinded as reconciled. In the way that his "Impose me penance..." seems to echo his wife's plea to Mosby "I will do penance for offending thee" (V111.115), there would seem to be the suggestion that he, like Alice, is indeed bewitched, deluded, or even doomed by passion.

The Holinshed account of Arden depicts a man who turns a blind eye to his wife's infidelity, so intent is he upon preserving his rights to Alice's dowry and his relationship with her influential family.⁹³ If the dramatist wants something of this to filter through into the play it is possible to see his sudden jealous outbursts as unguarded moments of understandable rage, and his abject apologies to both Alice and Mosby as the steps he takes to restore equilibrium to the situation. Gillet sees the playwright's portrayal of Arden as essentially that of a kind man who is flawed by avarice.⁹⁴ As far as his land dealings are concerned, Greene's accusation against him is not substantiated, and after Reede angrily calls God's vengeance down upon Arden, the latter assures Franklin: "But I assure you I ne'er did him wrong" (X111.57). From this statement it would

92. Gillet, p. 152.

93. Gillet, p. 151.

94. Gillet, p. 152.

seem that Arden works according to the law and that any suffering caused to others is inadvertent. Finally it is the epilogue that makes the clearest denunciation of Arden's acquisitiveness and certainly the symbolism of the curious two-year imprint of his corpse is portentous in its implications:

Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground
Which he by force and violence held from Reede,
And in the grass his body's print was seen
Two years and more after the deed was done.

(Epil. 10-13)⁹⁵

Gillet interprets Arden's eventual fall as due to the removal of divine protection because of the despoiling of a poor man.⁹⁶

The characters of Alice and Mosby are developed with considerable psychological complexity, and since they initiate the murder plot and persist in it with great tenacity, it is important to assess the extent of their criminality. In the plays discussed in this thesis Alice is by far the most impressive female character and she certainly dominates this play. Her character has drawn forth some extravagant comment from Gillet.⁹⁷ She is certainly subject to and tormented by an obsessive physical passion. But I attribute to her a far greater responsibility for her actions than Gillet would allow. It is true that she claims to have been "Gotten by witchcraft and

95. This strange happening is chronicled in Holinshed:
...all the proportion of his bodie might be seene two
yeares after and more, so plaine as could be, for the grasse
did not grow where his bodie had touched....

See Holinshed, p. 1066.

96. Gillet, p. 152.

97. Gillet thinks of Alice as a "minor Lady Macbeth", an "English Clytemnestra" and as resembling Anna Karenina. See Gillet, pp. 153-54. Dare I suggest yet another comparison for *Arden's* lovers? Surely there are some parallels between the relationship of the lovers and the symbolism of both *Arden* and Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*.

mere sorcery" (1.200). She says:

I was bewitched. Woe worth the hapless hour
And all the causes that enchanted me!

(V111. 78-79)

But the man she accuses insists on an equal claim to having been "bewitched". He complains that because of his relationship with her he has lost many opportunities for advancement, including a wealthy marriage:

This certain good I lost for changing bad,
And wrapped my credit in thy company.
I was bewitched - that is no theme of thine! -
And thou unhallowed hast enchanted me.

(V111. 91-94)

The fact that Mosby has foregone opportunity to gain the material wealth and position he seeks defeats any argument that he is only pursuing Alice for gain. Certainly he can envisage a time when he will need to "cleanly rid" himself of her (V111.43), but this deterioration in their relationship is due to the danger, frustration and insecurity which is engendered by the nature of their conspiracy. Mosby refers to the insecurity that marriage to someone who has already contrived the murder of her husband will entail:

You have supplanted Arden for my sake
And will extirpen me to plant another.

(V111. 40-41)

Gillet's understanding of Alice would seem to be influenced by the chivalrous Frenchman's capacity to excuse the woman in such circumstances as being swayed by a *crime passionel*. His description of her as resembling a "marionette" moving "mechanically towards her destiny", spiritually in love with her husband but physically entranced with Mosby, certainly makes her eventual spiritual reformation more

credible, but it is too kind.⁹⁸ There are too many incidents within the play that contradict this interpretation of her character, and her selfish disinterest in Bradshaw's fate at the end of the play when he appeals to her to exonerate him, is typical of the self-centredness we have seen her display throughout the drama. Listen again to Bradshaw's plea which should appeal to one who has genuine religious feeling:

Bradshaw: Mistress Arden, you are now going to God,
And I am by the law condemned to die
About a letter I brought from Master Greene.
I pray you ... speak the truth...

Alice. What should I say? You brought me such a letter,
But I dare swear thou knewest not the contents.
Leave now to trouble me with worldly things,
And let me meditate upon my Saviour Christ,
Whose blood must save me for the blood I shed.

(XV111. 2-12)

Bradshaw dies with the guilty! Alice's words show that now, as throughout the play, she has been determined to pursue her own will. The only interest she has now is her own salvation. Yet her repentant attitude has been heralded by her appearance with a prayerbook and a sorrowing conscience in Scene V111. The fact that such behaviour is short-lived, and is soon replaced by a determined will to pursue Arden's death, highlights the mercurial nature of her temperament. The playwright, whoever he was, demonstrates a remarkable insight into the complex personality of a wilful, sensual woman, not entirely devoid of moral awareness, but held in the throes of an obsessive passion.

It is difficult to argue too enthusiastically for any diminution of Alice's culpability even if she is motivated by such a strong passion, because the dramatist is careful to highlight her particularly strong will. Yet there is certainly the suggestion that Alice, Mosby and

98. See Gillet, pp. 154-55.

Arden are heading towards destruction because of their passions. Franklin remarks of Arden when the latter is easily deluded by Alice's fallacious arguments: "Poor gentleman, how soon he is bewitched!" (X111.153). The use of the word "bewitched" in relation to the passions of the three characters links them together as subject to the same forces of destiny.

The dramatist achieves such a forceful, life-like realization of Alice's character because of the language she speaks. Her complaint that she is bewitched and the subject of witchcraft and sorcery is a very apt way to describe the savage passions that direct her actions. Her wilful nature and lack of concern for the illicit nature of her relationship with Mosby is strikingly presented in what Youngblood describes as her pagan code of conduct.⁹⁹ She does not consider that she and Mosby are violating the bonds of her marriage with Arden, but rather that her lawful husband "usurps" Mosby's role:

Love is a god, and marriage is but words;
And therefore Mosby's title is the best.
Tush! Whether it be or no, he shall be mine
In spite of him, of Hymen, and of rites.

(1. 101-04)

When she soliloquizes we might well expect her to be speaking the truth. She complains that Arden's presence hinders her love for Mosby, and adds: "As surely shall he die/As I abhor him... (1.140-01). Although she assures Mosby that she would not consider murdering Arden were it not for the fact that he is a hindrance to their love (1.274-75), we cannot consider that this slight variation alleviates her guilt, especially in view of the fact that she does not seem to be hampered too much by her marriage. As soon as Arden departs for London Mosby usurps his role in a way that the play implies is quite the normal

99. See Youngblood, p. 209.

practice, and Alice says:

Mosby, you know who's master of my heart
He well may be the master of the house.

(1. 639-40)

Alice's active participation in the plots to murder her husband strongly condemns her. She is swift to administer the poison to Arden's broth - an act she must pursue by herself - and equally adept at throwing the broth quickly to the ground when her husband complains of the taste. With well-assumed wifely petulance, she storms:

"There's nothing that I do can please your taste" (1.368). She demonstrates this remarkable agility to cover awkward moments throughout the play until her part in the murder is discovered. Mosby is moved to exclaim at her astuteness when, following the abortive attempt to slay Arden in a fight, she pretends love for her husband and aversion for Mosby: "O, how cunningly she can dissemble" (XIV. 184).¹⁰⁰ She is far too accomplished at improvisation and at projecting the image of the petulant, temperamental housewife, to be labelled as a "marionette" or spellbound "sleepwalker".¹⁰¹ In the murder scene, when quite unnecessarily she snatches the weapon to stab her twice-wounded husband, the real extent of her villainy is most clearly demonstrated, both verbally and physically:

What, groans thou? - Nay, then give me the weapon! -
Take this for hindr'ing Mosby's love and mine.

(XIV. 237-38)

100. Gillet claims that Alice changes after V111.115ff. However her behaviour in these two scenes is very similar, and as one occurs before and one after the scene to which Gillet refers, I do not think that it is valid for Gillet to draw the conclusion that he does. The edition of the play which Gillet uses is divided into acts and the scene to which he refers is the one I have nominated as Scene V111.115ff. See Gillet, p. 155.

101. Gillet, p. 155.

Gillet's wrathful summation of Mosby's character as a "black-guard" is merited.¹⁰² He is indeed a man who knows how to manipulate his mistress and use his charms. But if he speaks the truth when he confronts Alice with the list of neglected opportunities and the cry that he too has been "bewitched" (V111.93), we must admit that the attraction between the lovers has been mutual. However, the contemptible nature of the insult he hurls at Alice in this scene has drawn fire from all the critics:¹⁰³

Go, get thee gone, a copesmate for thy hinds!
I am too good to be thy favourite.

(V111. 104-05)

But as Wine notes, it is in Mosby's defence, that this wounding attack rejoins Alice's taunt that he is "a mean artificer", who has besmirched her fair name. It is also worth commenting that such wounding speech often occurs where passions have run at abnormally high temperatures. Wine goes on to comment on the deterioration of Mosby as the play progresses, pointing to his wish to sever his relations with Alice early in the play. There are two occasions in the first scene where Mosby adopts such an attitude (1.184; 429-30), and each rejection would seem to be an obvious attempt by him to encourage Alice to persevere in attempts to murder Arden.¹⁰⁴ On both occasions he is successful. So we are not presented with a Mosby who deteriorates but rather a Mosby who excels at manipulation. There is certainly a juncture when he questions the direction he is taking, and it is significant that it happens at the beginning of the heated exchange just discussed, because it helps to explain Mosby's frame of mind:

102. Gillet, p. 152.

103. See, for example, Wine, Introduction, p. lxxi, and Gillet, pp. 152-53.

104. See Gillet, p. 152.

Well fares the man . . .
 That tables not with foul suspicion;
 My golden time was when I had no gold;
 Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure....

(V111. 7-12)

But it is not really guilt but rather fear of consequences that disturbs Mosby, for having "climbed the top bough of the tree" he is fearful of his "downfall to the earth" (15-18). The tone of Mosby's complaint resembles Macbeth's troubled speech, when again it is perhaps fear of the consequences rather than the dread act itself, and like Macbeth, he continues:

The way I seek to find where pleasure dwells
 Is hedged behind me that I cannot back
 But needs must on although to danger's gate.

(20-22)¹⁰⁵

Mosby completes his speech sounding like another Shakespearian character, Richard III, ruthlessly plotting the removal of all his fellow conspirators:

. . . for I can cast a bone
 To make these curs pluck out each other's throat;
 And them am I sole ruler of mine own.

(34-36)

It must be conceded that Alice is motivated by the passion that she bears for Mosby. Her unkind outbursts occur because she doubts his sincerity, and, in this scene, because her conscience troubles her. Never do we see her act in the chillingly hypocritical way that Mosby does when she enters just after he has enunciated his desire to be rid of her when Arden is murdered: "But here she comes, and I must flatter her" (V111.44). This is the section of the play where the full extent of Mosby's deterioration is demonstrated, and where his

105. Cf. *Macbeth*, 111.iv. 137-39.

full potential for evil is foreshadowed. Ultimately the lines that both speak when stabbing Arden are perhaps the true reflection of their motivation and of their nature.

Alice is undaunted by her infidelity, wilful, sensual, motivated by passion, and sometimes guilt-ridden. Although she is an extremely volatile character, she is also a more straightforward character than Mosby. Mosby merits a longer analysis. He starts as an ambitious self-seeking social climber, who is momentarily diverted by passion. Not guilt-ridden, but certainly aware of the discomforts afforded the man who is involved in danger, he calls himself back into line and determines to secure his earlier ambition of material wealth and power. Throughout the play he is dogged by a need to assert his merits. He is one of that dangerous breed who carry "a chip on their shoulder".

The author of *Arden* succeeds in presenting ambition of a sort that is far more within the reach of the audience than the towering ambitions of Marlowe's heroes or of Selimus. He also demonstrates an ability, not hitherto realized, to penetrate with great psychological insight into a partnership bonded by physical passion and the mutual, unlawful goal of murder. The consequent erosion of the personalities involved, and of the relationship itself, is shown as the inevitable result of participation in an enterprise in which guilt and danger are inherent, and where each character demonstrates his capacity for evil to the other. Although the playwright does not moralize, his policy of portraying the "simple truth" is surely edifying, because evil is portrayed on a level that is readily comprehensible, and all the more so, when the audience recalls that the crime depicted is factual. The effects of evil conduct are focussed upon in the fullest

way, both in regard to their everyday repercussions and in the consequent punishment from which no-one escapes.

CHAPTER V

USURPATION AND REBELLION

He knows not what it is to be a king,
That thinks a scepter is a pleasant thing.

Selimus, 35-36.

Historical themes have been popular with the dramatist in some of the earlier plays discussed, particularly in Bale's *King John*, *Respublica* and *Gorbuduc*, but in the 1590s there appeared a specific interest in the English drama, which focussed on England's more recent past, from the reign of Edward 11 to the victory of Henry Tudor in 1485. The reasons for this interest were various, but apart from the appeal of historical material for the audience itself, they were mostly of a political nature, in that events of the past were interpreted in a way that consolidated the rule of the Tudors. Where the dramatists are particularly concerned with royalty and civil peace the plays are concerned to focus on the issues in a way that is meant to be edifying as well as entertaining.

Tillyard refers to the practical uses of history, including the belief that impressed Raleigh, namely that history repeats itself, and so men may often be able to predict the pattern of future events, and from the successes or failures of the past, learn how to cope with them. Then, too, as men are frequently eager to achieve fame and glory, historical records provided the means of preserving noble deeds for the edification of future generations, in the same way that men from the sixteenth century were eager to emulate the great deeds of the historical past. Such deeds, it was hoped, would benefit the nation.

Particularly from the moralised history of a chronicler like Hall, Elizabethans were presented with a pattern from which they were able to apprehend the working out of God's Providence in past events. The peaceful reign they now enjoyed was largely because the sins of the past had been expiated, and because both Henry VIII and Elizabeth found favour with God because of their virtuous rule. An ever-present anxiety was the fear of another prolonged civil war like the War of the Roses, and the reign of the Tudors was represented in such a way that its preservation was seen as a guarantee that such conflict would not occur again. Henry Tudor had restored peace to the land by his successful overthrow of Richard III and by his marriage to Elizabeth of York, thus uniting the warring houses of York and Lancaster, since Henry was himself a descendant of the House of Lancaster. As Henry VII he had taken pains to reinforce his title to the crown by encouraging the idea that both he and his heirs were in some way a reincarnation of Arthur. Thus history itself was interpreted in such a way that rebellion and usurpation could be understood as the cause of civil war, and obedience and loyalty to a successful government and ruler, like the Tudors, the safeguard against such chaos.

The Church Homilies reinforced the political message that was to be drawn from history. The one most relevant to the history plays is the homily *Against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion* of 1574. It preached obedience to a monarch whether he was a good or bad ruler, because the dangers of rebellion were seen to outweigh the injustices that might be incurred under bad rule. Justification of such unquestioned obedience to a Prince was sustained by an appeal to the scriptures and particularly to Saint Paul, from which the homilist concluded that the king was God's regent on earth and that his power was divinely sanctioned. In much the same way as the existence of evil

is explained, the homilist described the rule of a bad king as being God's way of punishing men's sins. In this way such a king acted like God's scourge. Another danger of rebellion was that, if justified in one case, there was the possibility of its becoming frequent. The homilist drove his message home by adding a vivid account of all the horrors of civil war.¹

Although this concept of kingship was part of the medieval world picture, it was still valid to most Elizabethans. However, to argue for complete loyalty on the grounds that evil rule was a punishment for sins, and to attempt to justify this by demanding that all redress should be left to an unseen deity, was asking a lot of the thinking man, and giving too much to an improper ruler. Sanders comments that Tudor absolutism was a one-sided affair where rights but not responsibilities were emphasized.² Thomas Norton wrote the second Preface to *Grafton's Chronicle*, urging that kings could also learn from history, so that they might shun evil rule and emulate the good.³ In *Gorbuduc* (1560-1561), which Norton wrote in conjunction with Thomas Sackville, the king is shown as having fulfilled both sides of his contract, having ruled "For publique wealth and not for private joye" (1.ii.102), unlike both Marlowe's Edward 11 and Shakespeare's Richard 11.⁴

The dilemma to which the Tudor doctrine gave rise is examined

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1. For this information I am indebted to E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944), pp. 55-70.
 2. Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 149.
 3. See Tillyard, pp. 56-57. Tillyard also refers to Tito Livio's life of Henry V which was meant to encourage Henry VIII in a virtuous reign.
 4. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, *Gorbuduc*, in *Tudor Plays*, ed. Edmund Creeth (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 383-442.

in Marlowe's *Edward 11*, *Woodstock* and Shakespeare's *Richard 111*, and although these plays share some common themes, the attitudes of the playwrights towards the evils they depict are interestingly varied. Marlowe's *Edward 11* (1592-93)⁵ presents the audience with a king who is so obsessed by his infatuation for his favourite, Gaveston, that he has neglected the realm and its affairs abroad, as well as mishandled the nation's economy. While Edward indulges in masques and "lascivious shows" the treasury is bereft of funds, the commons complain, the "garrisons are beaten out of France", homes are burnt, "wives and children slain", and those who suffer curse the name of the king and of Gaveston (11.ii.157-81). All this information about the host of woes that beset the nation has been withheld until the second act. Marlowe has taken care that the audience should be confronted, initially, with the sensuous infiltrator, Gaveston, and the wilful and unruly passions of both king and barons.

In order to convey the king's destructive obsession for Gaveston, Marlowe has Edward employ the sort of imagery that suggests the total disruption of the natural order:

And sooner shall the sea o'erwhelm my land
Than bear the ship that shall transport thee [Gaveston] hence.

(1.i. 152-53)

Ere my sweet Gaveston shall part from me,
This isle shall fleet upon the ocean,
And wander to the unfrequented Inde.

(1.iv. 48-50)

He offers to placate his earls by allowing them to share the kingdom provided that "... I may have some nook or cranny left,/To frolic with

5. Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 431-533. All references to the text of *Edward 11* are from this edition.

my dearest Gaveston" (1.iv.72-73). His passion rises to a frenzy:

My heart is as an anvil unto sorrow,
And makes me frantic for my Gaveston.

(1.iv. 314-17)

Lancaster exclaims: "Diablo, what passions call you these?" (l.321).

In case the audience has not registered the unsanctioned nature of the king's passion, Lancaster's words make sure that they do so.

Clearly Edward has no concern for the "common weale".

Opposed to the king's passionate outbursts are the angry tirades of the proud and arrogant barons. Lancaster demands the exile of Gaveston, and threatens the king with the following ultimatum:

. . . either change your mind,
Or look to see the throne, where you should sit,
To float in blood, and at thy wanton head
The glozing head of thy base minion thrown.

(1.i. 130-33)

Even the more moderate Kent who might be seen as the only admirable character in the play, apart from the young prince, momentarily loses his self-control when the barons presume to make such spirited demands of the king:

Brother, revenge it! And let these their heads
Preach upon poles, for trespass of their tongues!

(1.i. 117-18)

Such is the style of rhetoric that the play pours forth, and so the audience is confronted with extremes of passion from all the main characters, and therefore unable to give its unqualified condemnation or approval to anyone. What it is able to do, however, is to observe the weaknesses, strengths and ungovernable passions of both king and barons and the subsequent instability of the situation. The play presents a study of the behaviour of proud, powerful men in a political arena, but it

as it touches King Edward, the Archbishop of Canterbury warns:

"But yet lift not your swords against the king" (1.iv.61). Lancaster also advises: "None be so hardy as to touch the king" (11.iii.28), and he assures the queen that it is not his intention "To offer violence to his sovereign!" (11.iv.34). But these affirmations do not express any abhorrence of rebellion as such. They simply warn against harming the king's person. The fact that restraint is ultimately not sustained demonstrates, however, one of rebellion's inherent dangers, namely its unpredictability. The Younger Mortimer reveals his awareness of the need to dress up the appearance of rebellion:

For, howsoever we have borne it out,
'Tis treason to be up against the king....

(1.iv. 282-83)

And when Lancaster complains that any remedial measures the barons might suggest would be frustrated by the king, Mortimer replies: "Then may we lawfully revolt..." (1.ii.73). However, these are the only times such sentiments about rebellion are spoken by the barons in the play, but they serve to demonstrate that they are indeed aware that revolt is treasonable. Nevertheless, Marlowe does not make a vehement condemnation of rebellion, but seeks rather to expose the nature of the evil, and this exposition eventually focusses on the dreadful perversion to which revolt is vulnerable. In *Edward 11* the consequences are illustrated with a far greater intensity of horror and suffering than the threatened chaos of a Jack Cade in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, where the threat is never allowed to eventuate.⁸

Reese also makes a claim for Marlowe's orthodoxy, supporting it

8. Shakespeare's play probably pre-dated Marlowe's. Bullough says that it was probably written by the end of 1591. See *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. 111, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 89.

by quoting Kent's outburst against Mortimer (1V.v.11-18). Yet Kent would seem to be condemning Mortimer's personal vendetta against the king rather than rebellion *per se*. Such comments would seem to denounce the murder or injury of the king but not rebellion against Edward's tyrannical and damaging government. The aim to remove Gaveston and the king's flatterers rather than the king himself is shown repeatedly (1.ii.61-62; 11.ii.105; 11.iii.28-29; 11.iv.34-36). In view of Marlowe's concern to emphasize the arrogant and unruly natures of the barons it should be no surprise that, even if sincerely meant at the outset, any desire for moderation will not be able to be sustained.

There is a notable use of the word "unnatural" in the play - to denigrate "subjects [who] brave their king" (111.ii.88); the resolution of the king to fight rather than to accede to just demands and so avoid civil disorder (111.iii.33); the slaughter of nobles and a preference for flatterers (1V.i.8); Mortimer's plan to murder Edward (1V.v.18); and finally to censure the queen's conduct (V.i.17). If the frequent use of the word is taken as a device to direct judgment, it is possible to understand that Marlowe wants the entire situation viewed as against nature; to be seen as discordant and chaotic, and caused by the proud and ungoverned passions of all the protagonists.

The most memorable act of evil in the play is the murder of King Edward. Because of the means used to kill him it is apposite to discuss briefly Edward's homosexual relationship with Gaveston. Sanders describes "the physical horror [that] masks a more profound psychological horror" and considers that the homosexuality of the king and his violent death dominate the entire play.⁹ Certainly Marlowe makes explicit the nature of Edward's relationship with Gaveston, and if at first he shows a certain relish in highlighting

9. Sanders, pp. 124-25.

this homosexual attachment through his evocative language, he now seems to show a peculiar fascination in Edward's torment by prolonging the events and enacting them in a manner which allows no concealment of the precise details. Throughout Edward's ordeal a drum beats continually to prevent his sleeping (V.v.63), and Lightborn instructs Matrevis and Gurney:

See that in the next room I have a fire,
And get me a spit, and let it be red-hot.

(V.v. 31-32)

He exults in his diabolical handiwork: "... ne'er was there any/So finely handled as this king shall be" (V.v.42-43). It is indeed a scene straight from hell with an aptly named Lightborn officiating. Granted that Holinshed details the methods of Edward's death, but it is another matter for Marlowe to choose to include these details in the play and to have them enacted before the audience.¹⁰ Leech thinks that Marlowe is demonstrating the depths of cruelty to which man can descend.¹¹ However, the peculiar intensity of vision that is projected by Marlowe's verse does seem to "italicize" these sections of the play. It could well be argued that this is Marlowe's way of emphasizing extreme cruelty in the way that Leech suggests. This is also consistent with my contention that Marlowe is concerned to describe and scrutinize man's actions.

I agree with Ribner that Marlowe does not appear to see a working out of a divine plan in history and that man rises and falls because of his own capabilities.¹² This is the case for Edward and for the Younger Mortimer who proudly says that it is he "Who now

10. Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Vol. 2, p. 587.

11. Clifford Leech, "Marlowe's 'Edward 11': Power and Suffering", *Critical Quarterly*, 1 (1959), 195.

12. Ribner, p. 128.

makes Fortune's wheel turn as he please" (V.ii.55). Mortimer speaks in the manner of what we have come to regard as the typical Marlovian overreacher, but he must eventually bow to "Base Fortune's wheel" (V.vi.59), when the young Edward III is able to muster sufficient strength to dispose of him.

The evils of murder and rebellion in *Edward III* are seen by Marlowe as being caused by men's actions, not by some retributive justice. Edward is called the scourge of England (III.iii.75), but he is not presented as the scourge of God in the way that Richard III is. Edward falls because his fatal weakness makes him an incompetent ruler; rebellion occurs because of the proud and ungovernable passions of both king and barons, and the Younger Mortimer stoically acknowledges the fact that once he has reached the highest point of Fortune's wheel he has nowhere to go but down. Marlowe's vision in *Edward III* is tragic in the sense that man is either at the mercy of his own nature or fickle Fortune. There is some reassurance introduced at the end of the play in the person of Edward III, but it is not projected with the same intensity as the domination of man by his perverse passions. Marlowe does not moralize, nor does he allow much moral awareness in his characters, with the exception of Kent and the young Edward. Even then there is no real stability envisaged, because Marlowe has insisted so clearly that man in general is ruled either by inward or outward circumstances.

The anonymous author of *Woodstock*¹³ has not the same intensity of vision as Marlowe has, and he conveys both good and evil with a humorous warmth. Hence there is none of the excessive suffering

13. *Woodstock*, ed. A.P. Rossiter (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

and horror that are found in *Edward 11*. It may sound contradictory then to say that in *Woodstock* Richard's advisers are shown as unreservedly evil whereas Edward's are mere flattering opportunists. But *Woodstock's* playwright has a purpose in preserving a very clear distinguishing line between the forces of good and evil, because he wants to highlight the circumstances where rebellion can be pardonable and seen as a cleansing measure rather than as sowing the seeds of chaos. Hence Richard's advisers are entirely self-interested and they plot to divide the spoils of the realm between them, led by the arch-villain, Tresilian, who is eager to claim his "slice of the cake":

So then there's four for me and three for him.
Our pains in this must needs be satisfied....

(1V.i. 9-10)

Cheyney describes Tresilian as "that sly machiavel" (1.i.63), and he certainly merits such condemnation. When he suggests that the nobles might be arrested for treason, the king is eager to have them executed forthwith. However, Tresilian warns:

It must be done with greater policy
For fear the people rise in mutiny.

(11.i. 45-46)

There is also something of the Morality Vice-figure in the dramatist's presentation of Tresilian.¹⁴ When he is captured at the end of the play Lancaster emphasizes this aspect of his portrayal when he says that Tresilian has been "the root and ground of all these vile abuses" (V.vi.14).¹⁵ Moreover his scenes with Nimble as well as those with his fellow-villains, when they devise schemes of bizarre injustices,

14. Morality associations are also noted by Rossiter in his Preface to *Woodstock*, p.24, insofar as they refer to the author's presentation of Nimble.

15. The *radix malorum* theme is characteristic of many of the Morality vices. See, for example *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, ll. 435 and 1419.

resemble similar scenes in the Moralities where the vices plot the overthrow of virtue. Such scenes tend to deflate the status of the villains, but the laughter that they elicit does not conceal the damage that is being done to the nation and its citizens. There is nothing comic about Tresilian's ambitions to

screw and wind the subtle law
To any fashion that shall like you best.
It shall be law, what I shall say is law.... 16

(1.ii. 47-49)

Opposed to these representatives of evil are the king's uncles, who are shown as patriotic towards their country and loyal to the crown. When the spirited Lancaster protests at the attempt against their lives, York is conciliatory:

We may do wrong unto our cousin king:
I fear his flattering minions more than him.

(1.i. 47-48)

And Woodstock, acknowledging the dangerous times, assures them:

afore my God I swear
King Richard loves you all: and credit me
The princely gentleman is innocent
Of this black deed....

(1.i. 133-36)

Both York and Woodstock seem eager to draw a distinction between the conduct of the king and his flatterers, but the playwright focusses on the true irony of the situation by presenting Richard as an active participant and about to urge the execution of all his uncles (11.i. 42). Woodstock is no fool, but the dramatist is keen to present his virtuous character with a humour that highlights his naivety. It is this combination of virtue and naivety that makes him no match for the evil forces he opposes. It is as if the author is saying "this

16. Compare Falstaff's boast "the laws of England are/at my command". 2 *HIV* (V.iii.132-33).

is the ideal attitude of loyal subject for king, and see how inadequate it proves". When the Commons rebel, it is Woodstock who restrains the nobles from taking arms against the king. When he urges a meeting of Parliament in order to avert the looming crisis, he unwittingly sets the scene for the removal of himself as Protector and for the dismissal of the nobles from the court. But in spite of all these setbacks, he remains loyal to the king until he is murdered.

In addition to protecting the nobles, particularly Woodstock, from any slur that is usually associated with rebellion, the dramatist exaggerates the conditions of the nation's misgovernment in order to underline the imminence of national disaster and the necessity of revolt, as all moderate attempts to effect a solution to the crisis meet with failure. Without Woodstock's restraining influence, Richard gives Bagot licence to squander much needed funds on bizarre modes of fashion, saying: "Do what ye will, we'll shield and buckler ye" (11.ii.180). Blank charters are to be served on the people; even murmuring against such injustices is to be regarded as treason; and the king will farm out his kingdom among his four minions and in return receive a yearly stipend.¹⁷ To weight the case for rebellion even more heavily, Richard and his accomplices arrange a masque in which they plan to kidnap Woodstock and effect his murder. The king's part in all this is emphasized: "I like it well sweet Greene; and by

17. The Chronicles record both the serving of blank charters and the alleged farming of the realm between the four knights, Scroope, Bushy, Bagot and Greene, for 1398. Holinshed also refers to the "murmuring" that the blank charters caused among the people. See Rossiter's "Source Materials", pp. 243-44. Rossiter also notes that Tresilian was innocent of involvement with the blank charters scheme as he was hanged ten years beforehand. General Notes (111.i.5f.), p. 220. See also references in Shakespeare's *Richard 11* to the blank charters, 11.i.63-64 and to the farming of the realm, 11.i.59-60.

my crown/We'll be in the mask ourself..." (1V.i.112-113). He tells Tresilian to send forth proclamations accusing York and Lancaster of treason, and is even prepared to trade English possessions for French aid - a course which would hardly have endeared him to a patriotic Englishman:

Lest the commons should rebel against us
 We'll send unto the King of France for aid,
 And in requital we'll surrender up
 Our forts of Guisnes and Calais to the French.

(1V.i. 121-24)

This scheme, and indeed all the plotting of the king and his favourites, is presented by the author as a sort of jolly escapade. Rossiter notes that Richard is presented by Woodstock's author in much the same vein as Shakespeare portrays him in the first two acts of his play, and he likens his behaviour to that of a "thwarted schoolboy preparing to break out or broken loose",¹⁸ and this is indeed an apt way of understanding the dramatist's portrayal of him. It is an effective way of highlighting the inadequacy of the Tudor political philosophy in circumstances where the Prince completely ignores his duties and responsibilities, and all the more so, when one recalls that all these plots are devised to ensure a continuance of funds for Richard and his so-called "four kings", and that such schemes are endangering the very existence of the nation. To add the final seal of approval for rebellion, the ghost of Edward III speaks to Woodstock shortly before he is murdered and so royally sanctions it.

The playwright's methods have been to paint the picture in definite shades of black and white as in a Morality play. Much is achieved to heighten this effect by the juxtaposition of contrasting

18. Rossiter's Preface, p. 43.

scenes; for example, the king and his favourites devise "wild and antic habits" in Act 11.ii, and this is followed by the scene in which the queen and her ladies sew for the poor (11.iii). Such moments are indeed potent visual invitations for the audience to condemn such abuse of power. Importantly, the barons are not motivated by ambition but rather by a concern for England.¹⁹ Rebellion is deferred until the final act, and only then does it occur because all other means to avert disaster have failed, and then it is royally sanctioned by the ghost of a former king. The rebellion itself is shown as successful and moderate in its aims, and protective of the king in that it brings him to repentance, however temporarily, and removes his dangerous favourites.

Therefore, the dramatist is not being irresponsibly unorthodox in his attitude, but rather is he constructive in providing responsible answers to the vexing problem of incompetent rule, and in demonstrating that such political dilemmas call for remedies by reliable administrators in the temporal world. Yet through a clever use of irony he also reveals the shortcomings of the accepted Tudor theory in relation to unquestioning obedience to a sovereign. Woodstock provides an outstanding example of the homilist's ideal, when like someone who has learned his lesson thoroughly, he unsuspectingly confronts a disguised Richard and his friends when they come to seize him at Plashey, and harangues them with the familiar condemnation of the evils of flattery to a youthful king. He goes on to add of Richard:

19. Bullough says that, historically, Woodstock was "cruel, self-seeking, unscrupulous, and a plotter against the King". Bolingbroke was said to have thwarted his attempt to depose Richard in 1388. See Bullough, (Vol. 111), p. 359. Such rearranging of historical material indicates the lengths to which the dramatist was prepared to go to achieve a design which would project his purpose.

But he's our king: and God's great deputy;
 And if ye hunt to have me second ye
 In any rash attempt against his state,
 Afore my God, I'll ne'er consent unto it.

... what's now amiss
 Our sins have caused... and we must bide heaven's will.

(1V.ii. 144-50)

Woodstock's words express all that is traditional, but they illustrate that just as he is no match for the disguised villains before him, the orthodox attitude towards such evil rule is itself entirely inadequate. There are other highly proper sentiments spoken. Tresilian speaks of the king's "sacred state" (11.i.34), and Richard himself talks of the vile sin of drawing swords "against our sacred person,/ The highest God's anointed deputy" (V.iii.57-58). For good measure the playwright includes readings from the chronicles. These are all fine, ironic touches, because they are spoken by those with a vested interest in preserving the *status quo* and by the miscreants themselves when they seek to clothe their villainies with "policy".

Rossiter has claimed that a weakness in the play's construction is that the forces of good and evil "come too little into open conflict".²⁰ However, it is partly because of this alleged failing that the dramatist is able to present the barons in a favourable moral light, and more importantly, he is able to protect the king from the full fury of the attack upon his government, so that the person of the king is not subjected to anything like the suffering of Marlowe's Edward 11 or the self-annihilation of Shakespeare's Richard 11. *Woodstock* is indeed a remarkable example of the Elizabethans' propensity for reorganizing historical events in order to further their didactic aims, and the dramatist, in this instance,

20. Rossiter's Preface, p. 33.

has done just this, not to avoid awkward questions, but so that he can provide satisfactory answers. It is obviously worth commenting however, that he has been able to do this by distorting events in order to resolve his problem. Neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare are able to shed such a reassuring light on the political arena, because they are concerned to project the complexities of human nature. The author of *Woodstock* takes the easy way out, in a manner of speaking, by resorting to a Morality structure to provide his solution. On the other hand, he dares to question seriously the doctrine that was dear to the heart of the Tudors and finds it wanting.

Shakespeare sets out to probe in depth the evils of rebellion and weak leadership in his Henry VI plays, and succeeds in exposing them in such a way that the relationship between them is inescapable. Detailed and enacted before the audience are the inadequacies of Henry's rule, the intrigue and treachery of the nobles, the revolt of the lowest social orders which threatens a total inversion of existing mores, and bloodshed on the battlefield soured with a mindless lust for revenge. In *1 Henry VI* (1590),²¹ Exeter's words are prophetic when they declare much that is to follow in the three parts of *Henry VI*:

'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands;
But more when envy breeds unkind division:
There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.

(1V.i. 192-94)

Envy and ambition certainly divide the nobles, and the young king's weakness and inexperience cause him to fuel the fires of dissension when he divides the forces, which should support the

21. William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross (London: Methuen, 1962). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

hard-pressed Talbot between the feuding York and Somerset. With Henry V dead, Talbot is presented as the honourable and heroic ideal patriotically determined to uphold England's glory. That he fails is due to the ignoble behaviour of the fractious nobles, who should unite before the common foe. They do not, and the consequent confusion and diminution of strength cause the death of Talbot and the defeat of the English forces. Lucy rightly declares:

The fraud of England, not the force of France,
Hath now entrapp'd the noble-minded Talbot....

(1V.iv. 36-37)

The importance of unity is emphasized because it is only the unifying leadership of La Pucelle that enables the French to defeat the English army, and so Joan's ability to unite the French highlights the evils of dissension in the English camp. Impressive to the French, her powers are attributed to witchcraft or hellish fiends by the English. Talbot exclaims:

Devil or devil's dam. I'll conjure thee:
Blood will I draw on thee, thou art a witch....

(1.v. 5-6)

That she is able to excell them in combat for a time is an insult that they do not take lightly. However, her conjuring up of fiends (V.iii), and her desperate manoeuvring when she is sentenced to death by the English suggest a thoroughly fraudulent performance, which Blanpied views as essentially manipulated to expose "the fraud of England".²² He points out that when Talbot is slain her powers evaporate. In this sense she is indeed "the English scourge" (1.ii.129). Although some attention is focussed on the French travail, it is England's cause that Shakespeare presents as the righteous one. The

22. John W. Blanpied, "'Art and Baleful Sorcery': The Counter-consciousness of *Henry VI, Part 1*", *Studies in English Literature*, XV (1975), 224.

admirable Talbot may be seen to stand for England and what is right, and the "sorceress", Joan, inspired by a devilish power, is recognizable as the evil force. The non-factual handling of much of the material concerning Talbot and Joan of Arc helps the playwright to accomplish this Morality design of good assailed by evil.²³ Less simply, Talbot represents what England should be, but is not, weakened as she is by an unfit ruler and feuding nobles. But somehow the stereotyped portrayal of Talbot as the upright warrior seems to suggest an order that is passing, in much the same way that Hotspur does in *1 Henry IV*.²⁴ Like Henry VI, who is too pious, and Woodstock who is too naively virtuous, both Talbot and Hotspur are inadequate and out of place in the world of political opportunism. Simple virtues and knightly chivalry may triumph in medieval literature, but Shakespeare's plays confront the disenchanted world of men and politics.

Part One of *Henry VI* ends on an ominous note. The storm imagery of the first act is recalled by that used to describe the passion that Suffolk's description of Margaret arouses in the king. Henry shows a lack of integrity and responsibility when he ignores Gloucester's reminder that he is already betrothed and his attitude bodes ill for his stability as ruler. Suffolk's words ensure that the audience is made aware of the danger ahead:

23. See Cairncross's Introduction, p. xl. Cairncross refers to Hall and Holinshed as Shakespeare's source for his material on Joan of Arc. Although the play finally condemns Joan, as indeed does Holinshed, it is, nevertheless, tempting to see some inconsistency or perhaps indecision in Shakespeare's representation of her. Such indecision is slight, but it would seem to emerge in V.iv.42-48, for example, and perhaps such moments are influenced by Holinshed's entry that on "8th July 1456, twenty-six years after her sentence, "a quite contrarie sentence was there declared", namely, that Joan was "a damsell divine" and the victim of a wrongful judgment. Yet Holinshed finally calls all to "iudge as ye list", keeping in mind her acts of "heinous enormities". See Holinshed, Vol. 111, pp. 168-72.

24. See Blanpied, p. 222.

Margaret shall now be Queen, and rule the King;
But I will rule both her, the King, and realm.

(V.v. 107-08)

These sorts of sentiments are paralleled later by Mortimer in Marlowe's *Edward 11* (1592-93), in similar circumstances to those in which Suffolk now finds himself (V.ii.5; V.iv.46); and by Falstaff (V.iii.138-39) in *2 Henry 1V* (1597-98), who envisages the same manipulation of power when Hal succeeds his father.

Part Two of *Henry VI* (1590-91)²⁵ shifts the scene to the English court, where the ambitious Cardinal Beaufort, Somerset and Buckingham plot to remove Gloucester as Protector. There is no cohesion among these plotters as each is striving to advance his own position. As in *2 Henry 1V*, the cleric is criticized for being "more like a soldier than a man o' th' church" (1.i.185). From the start the extent and intricate nature of the nobles' plotting is made apparent. Left alone, York reveals his devious plan for assuming kingship. It is quite true that what York criticizes as Henry's "bookish-rule" is destroying the nation; true also that the king's "church-like humours" do not make him a good ruler; but Shakespeare also demonstrates that York's own claims, despite their partial validity, are not commendable. His words may seem patriotic but there is also the covetousness of a self-seeking ambition in "for I had hope of France./Even as I have of fertile England's soil" (1.i.238-39). His devious nature is also made explicit in

Then, York, be still awhile, till time do serve:
Watch thou, and wake when others be asleep,
To pry into the secrets of the state....

(1.i. 249-51)

25. William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross (London: Methuen, 1957). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

Still more unscrupulous and inherently dangerous is York's incitement of Cade. The familiar sentiment of threatened insurrection is given an ominous twist when spoken by a tradesman in mundane prose and in terms appropriate to his calling: "Jack Cade the clothier means to dress/the commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap upon it" (1V.ii.4-6). The language in which this utterance is expressed intensifies the danger of threatened chaos, implying, as it does, an inexperience of statesmanship and a volatile prejudice against established customs. Cade's waywardness is emphasized further in "he can speak French; and therefore he is a traitor" (1V.ii.159-60), and "break open the/goals and let out the prisoners" (1V.iii.14-15). The Cade scenes are frightening in their impact and indeed show "the timelessness of Shakespeare's imagination",²⁶ but it must be remembered that York is the instigator, who is prepared to put the whole nation at risk in order that his own ambitions may be realized.

Thus Shakespeare insists on the immense danger that an ambitious and able man like York can pose to the stability of the nation. The potency of some of his claims - his legal right to rule and his recognition of Henry's ineptitude - fire his ambitions, but it is highly likely that a man of York's calibre would seek to usurp power without such justifications. There is indeed truth in Reese's observation that there is a hint of Marlovian stature in the figure of York, but that Shakespeare's purpose was too serious to focus on a single character.²⁷ However, the glimpses that we receive of him in this light tend to lend support to the speculation that he is, by nature, one who "reaches at the moon" (111.i.158). Despite this, Shakespeare

26. See M.M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty* (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 125.

27. See Reese, p. 181.

elicits sympathy for him at his death scene in Part Three of *Henry VI*, (1.iv).²⁸ This is largely because of the taunts regarding his young son's death, but it is also because of the biblical associations of the mock crowning scene, which serve to insist on some sort of sensitive response: "A crown for York! and, lords, bow low to him" (1.iv.94). The stage directions read: *Putting a paper crown on his head*.²⁹ Is Shakespeare eliciting the sort of sympathy that is evoked by Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* with his "Cut is the branch that may have grown full straight" (Epil.1), or is it that such a scene has great theatrical potential? Certainly York verbally assaults Queen Margaret with every vile epithet at his command, and the queen, in turn, is at her most ruthless. The result is, indeed, rousing theatre. The following are excerpts that illustrate this:

Q.Mar. What, hath thy fiery heart so parch'd thine entrails
 That not a tear can fall for Rutland's death?
 thou should'st be mad;
 And I to make thee mad do mock thee thus.
 Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance....

(1.iv. 87-91)

She merits York's vicious response:

She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,
 Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!
 How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex
 To triumph like an Amazonian trull....

(111-14)

If Joan of Arc is seen as the French "sorceress" of Part One, who is the scourge of the English, it is certainly the French queen who has now assumed her role as scourge of the English court. Like Joan, Margaret has profited by the disunity among the English lords;

28. William Shakespeare, *The Third Part of King Henry VI*, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross (London: Methuen, 1964). The date for this play is c.1590-91. All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

29. See Matthew, 27.29.

indeed she has taken every opportunity to escalate it, as the "opposite to every good" (3HV1, 1.iv.134). Hence, Shakespeare presents a fine dramatic scene to stir the audience, and he allows full condemnation of Margaret's role, thus providing the background for Richard's attack: "Foul wrinkled witch" in *Richard III* (1.iii.163). That York himself did not hesitate to conspire with Margaret in order to remove Gloucester makes his attack on the queen an unwitting condemnation of his own conduct.

The strongest criticism that the play makes of York, however, is in regard to his incitement of Cade. The complete social upheaval that Shakespeare suggests as the outcome when men like Cade become involved in insurrection, is given the genuine appearance of chaos by the threat of a society without civilized or rational leadership, and by its mindless destruction of all that learned men have laboured to discover. It does indeed foreshadow the "state of nature" that Hobbes was to expound in a later age. Briefly poised against such a conception of man is the pastoral picture that the king contemplates:

O God! methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now....

(11.v. 21-23)

But Shakespeare does not allow this alternative to provide any optimism, for the harsh realities of civil strife break in upon Henry's reverie in the tableau scenes of Son killing Father, and Father killing Son. The impact achieved by the abrupt intrusion of these mimed episodes vividly demonstrates the confusion and horror caused by civil war.

Shakespeare has shown repeatedly, throughout the three plays, that Henry's leadership is such that it invites insurrection. Although

York is shown as possessing stronger qualities of leadership, the manner in which the many facets of rebellion are described is sufficient proof that the dramatist found the evils inherent in such a course far greater than the failings of the king. Yet he does not minimize the fact that had the king been a fit ruler, the conniving of York, Suffolk, Beaufort and others could have been avoided or effectively checked. Clifford makes this point, when, wounded, he exclaims:

And, Henry, hadst thou sway'd as kings should do,
 I, and ten thousand in this luckless realm
 Had left no mourning widows for our death;
 And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace.

(11.vi. 14-20)

From the outset Henry reveals his unstable style of kingship, when he breaks his betrothal vow and recklessly trades Anjou and Maine for a bride who brings nothing but trouble in return. He then listens to the scheming Suffolk rather than to the trustworthy Gloucester, and his indecision is instrumental in the latter's death. The vapid remarks he makes at key moments in the drama highlight his ineptitude. When the queen accuses Gloucester of disloyal ambition, Henry says:

I prithee, peace,
 Good queen, and whet not on these furious peers;
 For blessed are the peacemakers on earth.

(2 HV1, 11.i. 32-34)

When the lords arrest Gloucester, although aware of his innocence, the king weakly gives way: "My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best,/Do, or undo" (2 HV1, 111.i.195-96). When he attempts a show of strength, with marked irony, Shakespeare has him say:

Had I but said, I would have kept my word;
 But when I swear, it is irrevocable.

(2 HV1, 111.ii. 292-93)

Henry's failings are not like those of an Edward 11 or a Richard 11. He is not wilful as they are, but he is exasperatingly inadequate. Unlike both these kings, he does sometimes demonstrate a genuine saintliness, as, for example, at the death-bed of the cardinal (2 *HVI*, 111.iii.19-29). Yet there is something contradictory between this sort of pious display, his envy of the shepherd's lot, and his frequent professions of obedience to God's will, and his desire to preserve the crown for himself at all costs. Acknowledging that his grandfather was a usurper, he entreats: "Let me for this my life-time reign as king" (3 *HVI*, 1.i.175). He then goes on to offer an invitation of ominous proportions to an ambitious man like York, when he tells him that he may "enjoy the kingdom after [his] decease" (1.i.181). His lack of foresight extends also to his disregard of his son's rights. No wonder Westmoreland exclaims: "Base, fearful, and despairing Henry" (1.i.178). The irony of this particular situation is that his son later reveals the very qualities of leadership which are lacking in Henry. As is the case with Edward 11 and Richard 11, Henry's birthright entails no guarantee of the requisite kingly attributes. Shakespeare's depiction of his character clearly exposes the link between incompetent leadership and rebellion.

Reese speaks of these three Henry VI plays as being unusual in that there is no "redeeming vision of an uncorrupted society and the possibility of virtue".³⁰ This is true, but I do not agree with the comment that Gloucester lacks depth. He alone perceives the dangers, but being alone, he is powerless in a world where "virtue is choked with foul Ambition" (2 *HIV*, 143). This is the dilemma in a situation where ambition and manipulation thrive unchecked. Certainly the

30. Reese, p. 188.

simplicity of the Nevilles may be seen as a vice, for although they see the peril surrounding Gloucester, they lack the ability to help him.³¹ Simplicity of virtue and outlook is an issue of importance in these plays. Woodstock's simplicity makes him inadequate, and that of Henry VI's can be seen as largely responsible for most of the horrors of the revolution. Such simplicity is ineffectual in the complex world of politics, and these particular inadequacies are dealt with by Shakespeare in both parts of his Henry IV plays.

Certainly the bloodiest consequence of the involved and prolonged conflict in the early Shakespeare history plays is contained in the revenge theme. Vengeance begins to form a pattern on the battlefield in *1 Henry VI* and continues until it reaches ferocious proportions in the slaying of Rutland and Prince Edward in *3 Henry VI*. It is to continue, of course, in *Richard III*, but with a refinement that sets it apart from the rest of the Shakespeare canon. Richard's contempt for his brothers and "all the unlook'd for issue of their bodies" (*3 HV1*, 111.ii.131), drives a wedge between him and other men just as effectively as his physical appearance does, shaped by "frail Nature...Like to a chaos" (111.ii.155-61). The enunciation of his unnatural attitude to his kin and his intention to "set the murderous Machiavel to school" (111.ii.193) alienates him. A slight sympathy may be aroused in modern minds because of his awareness of his physical deformity, but his words and actions soon still such a tendency, particularly in the scene where he murders Henry VI. Indeed this is a skilful preparation by Shakespeare to have Richard emerge from *3 Henry VI* carrying all the burden of evil from the foregoing ferocity within his person: "I that have neither pity, love nor fear,/"

31. Reese makes this point. See p. 188.

... I am myself alone" (3 HV1, 68-83). The ominous nature of Richard's special inheritance is emphasized by Henry VI's words:

And thus I prophesy: that many a thousand,
 Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born.
 The owl shriek'd at thy birth- an evil sign;
 Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born
 To signify thou cam'st to bite the world....

(V.vi. 37-54)

The alleged sinister repercussions of the natural world at the time of Richard's birth suggest that his role has been pre-ordained, and thus he appears centre-stage in Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1592-93)³² informing the world that he is "determined to prove a villain":

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
 To set my brother Clarence and the King
 In deadly hate the one against the other
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up....

(1.i. 30-38)

Clearly there is to be no respite from the plotting and bloodshed of the earlier plays, but in Richard himself, Shakespeare has realized something dramatically unique by submerging all the turbulence of the Henry VI plays within this one central character. For the first three acts Richard is presented in the style of the Morality Vice figure, entertaining, preaching and revealing his fell purposes.³³ But Shakespeare has explored this device to greater effect than his predecessors, because as well as concentrating all the evils of the preceding plays within Richard, he has also spotlighted him to

32. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard the Third*, ed. Mark Eccles (New York: The New American Library, 1964). All references to the text of the play are from this edition.

33. This is recognized by several critics, but notably by Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), p. 170.

emphasize his solitariness in both the moral and physical sense.

Like the Vice, he formally acknowledges his role:

Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralize two meanings in one word.

(111.i. 82-83)

Although as Iniquity he represents all kinds of evils, there is a paradox in the sense that through him all wrongs are eventually righted. Rossiter notes this and adds that in this respect he is "a king who 'can do no wrong'".³⁴ As Ornstein says, Richard repays "perjury with perjury, treachery with treachery, murder with murder, [until] he has settled all the criminal accounts of the past".³⁵ This is a major reason why a knowledge of the Henry VI plays is invaluable for a full appreciation of *Richard 111*.³⁶ In this way sympathies can be more discreetly extended or withheld, and the pattern of justice, such as it is, more completely discerned.

In keeping with Shakespeare's presentation of Richard through the device of the Morality vice, Richard is a consummate actor, dazzling the audience with the range of his performance, making it aware of his motives, and of the contempt in which he holds those who surround him:

Clarence, who I indeed have cast in darkness,
I do beweepe to many simple gulls,
Namely to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham....

(1.iii. 326-28)

Here is the arch-hypocrite and cynic, and if his honesty contains much of the braggart, it also exposes the gullibility and lack of

34. A.P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns*, ed. Graham Storey (London: Longmans, 1961), p. 20.

35. Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 79.

36. Tillyard also recognizes this, pp. 199-200.

moral perception in those with whom he associates. But his is not the only hypocrisy. In Act 11.i, King Edward, Queen Elizabeth and courtiers enter proclaiming "duteous" and "perfect love", as if such sentiments were the general rule. Ironically, one of the most outspoken is Buckingham, and in time he will rue the words he speaks. For the audience, who has just witnessed the exit of Clarence's murderers, the effect is largely comic. Interrupting this sanctimonious exchange, Richard enters, alone aware of Clarence's murder. As usual he outshines the others for sheer audacity. If he has been guilty of any rancour: "I hate it, and desire all good men's love". He concludes his comprehensive peace pact piously: "I thank my God for my humility" (11.i.62,74). But surely, for absolute virtuosity, the scene with Buckingham surpasses all others. It is interesting to notice how like Richard Buckingham has become - perhaps a reflection by Shakespeare regarding the contagious nature of evil. Most importantly, of course, it is the sheer dramatic dynamics of the scene that demand a conspirator. Buckingham replies to Richard's coaching:

Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
 Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
 Intending deep suspicion. Ghastly looks
 Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
 And both are ready in their offices
 At any time to grace my strategems.

(111.v. 5-11)

Rossiter's remark that "Shakespeare is giving not merely 'the acting of drama', but also 'the drama of consummate *acting*'" is particularly apt, as Buckingham takes over Richard's directing role, and himself sets the following scene:³⁷

. Intend some fear;
 Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit;

37. Rossiter, p. 18.

And look you get a prayer book in your hand
And stand between two churchmen....

(111.vii. 44-47)

Both Richard and Buckingham are cynically aware of the impression that religious zeal will make on the mayor. Richard, on cue, very truly proclaims his unworthiness for the office of kingship:

Your love deserves my thanks, but my desert
Unmeritable shuns your high request.

Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
So mighty and so many my defects....

(153-59)

Buckingham is much impressed for such hesitation "argues conscience" in Richard, who finally bows to the mayor's urgent entreaties, saying very untruthfully:

For God doth know, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire of this.

(234-35)

This scene demonstrates a remarkable achievement by Shakespeare. It seems to take off with a life of its own. Certainly its major impact derives from its great and entertaining theatre. Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard, particularly in the use he makes of the Vice figure, is most effective in conveying the idea of a totally evil man. Richard knows where he wants to go and sets forth with exuberance and audacity. Conscience or hesitation bother him not at all. The very minimal emergence of conscience is brief and it does not occur at all while the Morality device of the first three acts prevails. Marlowe's Mortimer lacks humour, but Richard certainly does not. There is a liveliness and versatility that is peculiarly his. In portraying Richard in this way it seems that a predominant concern of Shakespeare's was with the exciting stage figure that he had

created; exciting in the sense that while a comic, exuberant figure whose very hypocrisy mocks at the moral ineptitude and pretence of others, yet he is still the "elvish marked, abortive, rooting hog", who leaves women childless and widowed, and eliminates all who threaten his ambitions. Marlowe achieves something like this effect with Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, and, like Shakespeare, he uses the Morality Vice device in order to expose the nature of his character. However, Richard is the greater achievement, partly because Shakespeare's vision and purpose is broader, and partly because his method of projecting Richard or of allowing Richard to project himself is more subtle, whereas Marlowe tends to over-emphasize his portrait of Barabas.

Within the structure of the play, however, this scene between Richard and Buckingham is important and dramatically effective, because it marks the end of Richard's hypocritical antics, since what they were aimed at has been achieved. The skills which have won the crown for Richard are not well adapted to keeping it. Hence the coronation may be seen as a turning point in the drama. When Richard makes his intentions known regarding the young princes he reveals a chillingly Machiavellian character. Gone is the pretence in:

Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,
And I would have it suddenly performed.

(1V.ii. 18-19)

Buckingham's momentum is checked, and Richard immediately notices: "High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect" (1V.ii.31). The reference to Buckingham as "high-reaching" is interesting. Clearly the dual performance of such virtuosity (111.vii) implicated Buckingham as profoundly as it did Richard. In a dramatic and moral sense,

they were conspirators on an equal footing for this one high moment in time, and Richard's remark now highlights the limit of Buckingham's endurance as Richard's partner, and the beginning of his downfall. However, the end of this partnership and the murder of the Princes mark a change in Richard's meteoric rise also. Ornstein comments that Richard seems to have "the need - the 'moral' need - for Buckingham's company in hell".³⁸ This statement raises a problem, however. How long could an essentially solitary and ambitious man like Richard endure one whom he himself has described as high-reaching? And could the play itself successfully accommodate two such men for its duration? Yet there is truth in Ornstein's observation. The dreadful solitariness to which Richard condemns himself makes him especially vulnerable. This seems to be part of the inexorable working out of justice. The impetus that has made him remove all those who have committed crimes in the past brings him ultimately to isolate himself, and so "with perfect justice he becomes his own nemesis".³⁹ His earlier recognition: "I am myself alone" becomes increasingly the dreadful psychological exegesis of his nature and actions, and this is underscored again before Bosworth:

. . . There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul will pity me.
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?

(V.iii. 201-04)

Richard, who has been completely coldblooded to all, particularly to his own family, has no pity for himself. Shakespeare has made him, in this sense, a sort of mechanical man, programmed to destroy and self-destruct. Richard's understanding of self-love comes down to:

38. Ornstein, p. 74.

39. Ornstein, p. 79.

"Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I." The awful inevitability of his actions seems to stem from his nature, formed by "dissembling Nature,/Deformed, unfinished..." (1.i.19-20), doomed by his father's words:

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth
A bird that will revenge upon you all....

(3 *Henry VI*, 1.iv. 35-36)

It is logical that Richard should be contemptuous of religious formulae, for the emphasis on his physical appearance and his own conception "I am myself alone" excludes any spiritual component in his being. His nature and his actions are explained in thoroughly naturalistic terms. Shakespeare seems to be suggesting this completely evil, self-explanatory creature, as the worst result of the many years of upheaval and corruption. Others lose their morality or their moral courage - Richard his humanity. Yet Shakespeare's comprehensive understanding of human nature allows brief signs of a moral awareness in Richard before Bosworth. He may insist that he is a completely separate entity without emotions, yet he utters:

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me as a villain.

(V.iii. 194-96)

But Richard speaks of conscience as if it were apart from him, not a part of him. It is also "coward conscience", so that fear rather than moral awareness may motivate it. To complete Shakespeare's depiction of his character, it is fitting that Richard should swiftly revert to his old exuberance, and he goes to his death as Shakespeare's most dynamic theatrical creation.

The concept of evil and divine Providence in *Richard III* is a complex one. It is tempting perhaps to adopt Tillyard's solution

to the play as "the working out of God's plan to restore England to prosperity".⁴⁰ Ribner has much the same conclusion to offer, namely, that Shakespeare's aim is "to emphasize the role of providence in history, and to show how God's grace enabled England to rise out of the chaos of the Wars of the Roses."⁴¹ I cannot deny that these interpretations are valid up to a point, although perhaps only in regard to Act V. If we are to consider Richard as an instrument of God's justice throughout the play, then it would seem permissible to question the nature of the justice that is being distributed. I think that the line that Shakespeare is taking is a more complicated one than Tillyard and Ribner would allow. For this reason I respect Sanders' recognition of the complexity of these themes in the play: "Providence is at times transmuted into a natural providence". He goes on to cite two occasions where Buckingham (11.i. 32-40) and Richard (1V.iv.398-408) both call down curses upon themselves. He says:

On the one hand, the revenge of an outraged moral order is figured in the fulfilment of the curses; but on the other there is remarkably little hint of the supernatural about either the invocation of the penalties, or their fulfilment.⁴²

Before he dies Buckingham recognizes the fulfilment of the penalty he has invoked, but he also adds:

That high All-seer which I *dallied* with
Hath turned my *feigned* prayer on my head
And given in earnest what I begged *in jest*.
Thus doth he force the swords of wicked men
To turn their own points in their masters' bosoms.

(V.i. 20-24)

Buckingham's retribution has been inflicted from above, but *through*

40. Tillyard, p. 199.

41. Ribner, p. 116.

42. Sanders, pp. 98-99.

his own actions. In *Edward 11* men's actions are seen frequently as causing their dilemma, and the same idea is present in Shakespeare's play. However much there is a recognition of the divine role, nevertheless man is seen to be free in his choices, insofar as circumstances or character allow him to be. In the foregoing quotation I have taken the liberty of italicizing some of the words because they explain the attitude of Buckingham and most of the characters in the play to Providence's role. The hindsight which makes such characters as Rivers and Buckingham realize too late what might have been, indicates the moral inertia to which all have fallen victim, and not surprisingly, when one considers the disunity and moral disintegration which have grown to enormous proportions in the Henry VI plays and culminated with horrendous evil in *Richard 111*.

In Richard's case, the major curse he brings upon himself "Myself myself confound" (1V.iv.399), is discernible as self-inflicted rather than as deriving from a supernatural source. This kind of interpretation emphasizes Richard's solitariness, and is logical, when one considers that divine Providence is not something in which Richard believes except insofar as it is expedient for him to appear to do so. It is ironic then that this unrecognized Providence should use Richard as a means to distribute justice to those who committed or sanctioned crimes in the past. And it is double ironic that the means which Richard uses to punish such crimes eventually "confound" himself - ironic and poetically just. This is a logical solution and shows an integrity of purpose on Shakespeare's part, since the justice meted out to Richard can be attributed to his own actions rather than directly to supernatural intervention. Further, Shakespeare can be seen as implying that excessive evil is capable of destroying itself.⁴³ In a literary sense it seems to sustain the metaphor

43. See Sanders, p. 105.

of Richard's having been formed by "dissembling Nature", of his having risen like a phoenix from his father's ashes as a bird of prey, and of his having been "deformed, unfinished" - all this suggesting that some vitally human quality has been forgotten in his formation. It is a concept of evil which is terrifying, but tragic, centred as it is within one man, and alienating him, as it does, from the human race, which includes his would-be accomplices and the murderer, Tyrrel.

Rebellion can also be explained in naturalistic terms. As Richard has attempted to destroy the natural moral order, or at least succeeded in suppressing it for some time, insurrection may be interpreted as a natural resurgence of good or, as Sanders says, "human mutuality ... gains strength from being dammed up".⁴⁴

My conclusion, then, to the problematical themes of Providence and evil, becomes a recognition of the dual roles of divine Providence and a natural providence, and a strong inclination to agree with Sanders' understanding that it is "a process which, though the result of individual decision, somehow adds up to a revenge of nature upon the usurper".⁴⁵ However, I have misgivings about seeing the role of providence, or whatever one wishes to call it, solely in the way Sanders offers, in much the same way as I cannot accept the "rigid Tudor *schema* of retributive justice", to which Rossiter refers as a sufficient explanation, although he likens it persuasively to "a sort of analogy to Newton's Third Law in the field of moral dynamics: 'Action and reaction are equal and apposite'".⁴⁶ I think both Sanders and Rossiter are expressing what is undoubtedly in *Richard III*, but neither exegesis by itself is sufficiently comprehensive. Rossiter's

44. Sanders, p. 103.

46. Rossiter, p. 2.

45. Sanders, p. 103.

may have satisfied most Elizabethans, but Sanders extracts an interpretation, which seems to have teased Shakespeare's imagination, and was, no doubt, largely generated by the character he had developed in Richard.

If one supposes a higher moral order, crimes should be punishable, and in *Richard III*, it is men's own actions which incur the penalties. Richard is an instrument of punishment, and in his own way, he is as exact as Queen Margaret is about the punishment suiting the crime. If one is to give credit to the medieval belief that God could use an evil man as his scourge (and the Homilies in their reference to tyrants reveals that many Elizabethans would have done), there emerges a clearer impression of Providence's role. To be consistent, one must add, therefore, that this role is discernible in an avenging Old Testament light. Later in the play this is tempered by the manner in which Richmond is presented by Shakespeare, and it is here, I would suggest, that the playwright has carefully prepared the way for such an interpretation.

There are many obvious allusions to an avenging God in Margaret's curses:

Thy Edward he is dead, that killed my Edward;
Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward....

(1V.iv. 63-64)

There is no scope for mercy in Margaret's God. He is "upright, just and true-disposing" in his precise matching of crime with punishment. This conception of God says much for Margaret's own nature, for her part in past crimes has been far from merciful, and the ranting, bitter old woman she has become is her punishment, just as much as Richard is his own and that of others.

Prophecy plays an important role in the play. As Margaret's

curses are fulfilled she is regarded as a prophetess, but a prophet also existed in her husband, Henry VI, who prophesied of Henry, Earl of Richmond:

Come hither, England's hope.
 If secret powers
 Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
 This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
 Likely in time to bless a regal throne.

(3 *Henry VI*, IV.vi. 68-74)

Richmond's removal to safety implies a special purpose for which his survival is necessary. It is in the realization of this prophecy that Richmond's role as saviour is given a heightened sense, and it is apposite that he should come speaking of peace, freedom, and "pardon to the soldiers fled" (V.v.16). For this reason I would disagree with Rossiter's statement that a merciful God is absent from *Richard III*.⁴⁷ He is fittingly absent from the play during the tyranny of Richard's reign and the terror of his ruthless climb to power, and just as fittingly represented through Richmond's mission to free the nation from Richard's thralldom.

Ribner sees Richmond as God's instrument for removing Richard and says that "Shakespeare ... uses every dramatic device he can to portray Richard's death as caused by God rather than by man".⁴⁸ Richmond may be God's instrument, but the emphasis is placed by Shakespeare on his role as deliverer for the entire nation rather than so purposefully as Richard's eliminator. In fact, as Ornstein has so rightly pointed out, it is the stage direction only in Act V.v that reveals to us that Richmond actually kills Richard in combat.⁴⁹ I would suggest that this method is used deliberately by Shakespeare

47. Rossiter, p. 22.

48. Ribner, p. 117.

49. Ornstein, p. 79.

because he wishes to preserve, at least in part, the idea that Richard has confounded himself, and that somehow nature too has been revenged upon the usurper. It is also worth mentioning that it is in keeping with the Morality pattern that the Vice should be killed at the end of the play in just such a peremptory manner. Since Richard's presentation resembles that of the Vice-figure so closely in the first three acts of the play, there is even a special dramatic logic for the method of his demise and exit. Brooke discerns another solution altogether, and I think his response indicates the broad scope of Shakespeare's imaginative grasp of events and history:

... the force that builds up against Richard till his fall becomes inevitable is not Richmond, but the ritual of history, the swelling chorus of a more-than-human force.... History, therefore, becomes imaginatively felt as an impersonal force rolling on beyond the lives of ordinary men....⁵⁰

Brooke's understanding of an inevitable historical sweep may posit too abrupt a transition from the play's main preoccupation of focussing on Richard as very much occupying the centre of the stage. But this is not necessarily so. Undoubtedly Richard has indulged in hypocritical pranks in which the audience has been invited to participate. These, his speech, and the particular "theatrical mode"⁵¹ of his presentation have isolated him theatrically, just as his actions have ensured his ultimate, vulnerable solitariness. But the theatrical has a definite connection with the historical dimension of the play, for through it is demonstrated the insignificance of one man's performance against the macroscopic backdrop of human history. *Richard III* may be one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, but in it he shows a far more imaginative grasp of how to use

50. Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 52.

51. Brooke, p. 57.

the stage and the drama to project a powerful concept of evil, than any of his predecessors or contemporaries had done.

Rebellion against Richard is not seen as an evil in this play.⁵² Rather is it seen as the means to end all those evils of bloodshed, treachery, and disorder, which insurrection is supposed to entail under normal circumstances. But the times have been far from normal:

England hath long been mad and scarred herself;
The brother blindly shed the brother's blood,
The father rashly slaughtered his own son,
The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire.

(V.v. 23-26)

This deliberate recalling of the civil strife in *3 Henry VI* is only one indication that the rebellion led by Richmond is a mission of deliverance rather than an insurrection. All the conventional arguments used to oppose revolt are used to shed a favourable light on this mission. Richard is "God's enemy" (V.iii.253); "a bloody tyrant and a homicide" (V.iii.247); and Richmond regards himself as God's "captain" and prays: "Make us thy ministers of chastisement" (V.iii.114).

The ghosts' appearance is not to signal divine intervention as much as it is to justify and encourage Richmond's action. As in *Woodstock* the sanction for revolt is royal as two of the ghosts represent the true heirs of both the houses of York and Lancaster. Their appearance also foreshadows a future unity as opposed to the disunity which has divided the nation for so long.

The issue of a weak ruler is also of no concern in *Richard III*, but it is vitally important to recognize that a strong Henry VI could have prevented all or most of the evils in this tetralogy. What we

52. Buckingham's rebellion is indeed seen as evil, and his crime is recognized by him as instrumental in his own downfall. See V.i.23-24.

do see demonstrated is the rule of a tyrant, the sort of king that the homilist preached was sent by God to punish men for their sins. This, indeed, we do see worked out in a rigidly retributive pattern. And it is when the scales of justice are evenly balanced that Shakespeare introduces the saviour-figure of Richmond.

Since Shakespeare's first history tetralogy so clearly identifies weak rule as the chief cause of rebellion and usurpation, it is apposite that his second history tetralogy, written in the second half of the decade (c 1595-99), should confront this particular problem by focussing on the qualities of good leadership. The theme of rebellion still occurs, but strong leadership is able to deal with it effectively. Compared to the behaviour of the unruly barons in Marlowe's *Edward 11* and the divisive and ambitious lords of the Henry VI plays, the rebels in *1 and 2 Henry IV* are shown as remarkably rational and fully aware of the consequences of their treasonable actions. Worcester demonstrates this when he voices his distrust of the king's offer of a truce: "For treason is but trusted like the fox" (V.ii.9) in *1 Henry IV*.⁵³ I do not wish to include Hotspur among the number of reasoning dissidents, however, for his rallying cry "Doomsday is near. Die all, die merrily" (1V.i.133), is out of place in this world of political realism, belonging more to the world of Malory's knights. The use that Worcester makes of him shows Hotspur's political naivety and the unscrupulousness of the older man. Worcester, afraid of the consequences of his part in opposing the king, conceals the news of a truce from his nephew, because he considers that a "hare-brained Hotspur" may well be forgiven by the king, as he has "The excuse of youth and heat of blood" (V.ii.17) on

53. William Shakespeare, *The History of Henry IV* (Part One), ed. Maynard Mack (New York: The New American Library, 1965). All references to the text are from this edition.

rebellion, but accepts that

. . . . we are all diseased,
And with our surfeiting and wanton hours
Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,
And we must bleed for it...

I have in equal balance justly weighed
What wrongs our arms may do, what wrongs we
suffer,
And find our griefs heavier than our offenses.

(1V.i. 54-69)

This is a very different situation to that in Marlowe's *Edward 11*, where man is shown to be at the mercy of his own unruly nature or the whims of fickle fortune, or in the Henry VI plays, where ambition and ruthlessness dominate man. Although a part of this reasoning capacity in the Henry IV plays may be attributable to a Machiavellian-type of realism rather than a virtuous motivation, yet some of the characters, even among the rebels, are shown as recognizing ethical action to be a good in itself. Whatever the motivation, the hard determinist line, which Marlowe in particular would seem to espouse, is rejected in favour of the older concept that man is self-governable if his reason controls his passions. This development in the Henry IV plays introduces a more optimistic image of man. Yet, at the same time, it must be admitted that Part Two is a sadder play than *1 Henry IV*. Increased conscience in the king, the absence of the madcap Hotspur, and an older, diseased Falstaff are partly responsible for this change, but there is also a greater disillusionment detectable in Shakespeare's vision of the political arena. The outstanding example of this disenchantment is evident in the Gaultree incident.

It is difficult to speculate with any certainty as to Shakespeare's precise sentiments in regard to the action taken against

the rebel leaders at Gaultree by Lancaster and Westmoreland. He neither condemns nor condones it, but the dialogue shows a scrupulousness which has implications. When Mowbray asks: "Is this proceeding just and honorable?", Westmoreland counters with: "Is your assembly so?" Then Lancaster explains his rigid interpretation of the pact he offered the rebels, explaining that he did not pledge them any pardon:

I promised you redress of these same grievances
Whereof you did complain, which, by mine honor,
I will perform with a most Christian care....

(1V.iii. 113-15)

That the word "Christian" here implies a derogatory judgment on Shakespeare's part might well be argued. In addition the whole scene between the rebel leaders and the royal princes at Gaultree is fraught with Machiavellian innuendo.⁵⁶ To argue that this is intentional on Shakespeare's part presupposes a knowledge of Machiavelli's *Il Principe* or a translation of it. Yet the idea of necessity recurs throughout the Henry IV plays particularly in regard to Shakespeare's treatment of rebellion. It is introduced first by Worcester when he explains his insubordination to the king (1 *HIV*, V.v.11-13), and continues through to the Gaultree episode. Certainly the joint action of Westmoreland and Lancaster contains a strong element of deterrent, and it may have been possible that Shakespeare recognized that such methods were effective in dealing with an evil as dangerous as rebellion, even if they were repugnant. However, his ideal ruler, Henry V, does not resort to such treachery.

56. For example, Westmoreland tells Mowbray: "Construe the times to their necessities,/And you shall say indeed, it is the time" (1V.i.103-04). Compare this with: "he is happy whose mode of procedure accords with the needs of the times, and similarly it is unfortunate whose mode of procedure is opposed to the times". See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (New York: Random, 1950), p. 92.

The disenchanted view which seems to be so much a feature of *2 Henry IV*, particularly in relation to political matters, seems to extend to the rebels' attitudes to each other. Morton is cynically aware of the Archbishop's role in dressing up rebellion with religious guile (1.i.190-210). It is rare that a man playing the sort of role that the Archbishop is should be allowed the perception to observe:

What trust is in these times?
They that when Richard lived would have him die
Are now become enamored on his grave.

(1.iii. 100-02)

These words demonstrate the fickleness of man's allegiances and hence the unstable nature of rebellion. It is this same awareness that makes Henry IV distrust those who supported his deposition of Richard II, and the precautions he takes against them are partly responsible for the anger and sense of grievance that they feel against the king.

Bolingbroke is certainly the most controversial character in this tetralogy, partly because he is a usurper, and partly because his true motives are difficult to assess. Shakespeare invites a variety of responses to Bolingbroke's conduct largely because of the reticence with which he portrays him - a fact that is highlighted by his denomination of him as the "silent king".⁵⁷ This description is remarkably apt for what it hints at in the conscience of the king of the Henry IV plays, and for what it says of Bolingbroke as he stands quietly by, while Richard II holds the stage with a flow of well-chosen words (*R11*, 1V.i.162-309). It is ambiguous, however, like much of Bolingbroke's behaviour, for while his silence may be attributed to pity or compunction, it also succeeds in

57. See William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure (London: Methuen, 1961), 1V.i.290. The date of this play is 1595. All references to the text of *Richard II* are from this edition.

"out-facing" Richard and allowing him to depose himself.

Ribner makes a sound case for understanding Bolingbroke as a "true Machiavellian", substantiating his claim by relating Bolingbroke's actions to the precepts of Machiavelli in all the relevant instances, and drawing a parallel between the Italian conditions which influenced Machiavelli's philosophy, and the English situation to which Gaunt refers:

This land of such dear souls...
Is now leas'd out - I die pronouncing it -
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.

(*R11*, 11.i. 57-60)

Ribner concludes:

In almost every important act, from his quarrel with Mowbray in the opening scene, to his projected pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the closing, the underlying philosophy of Machiavelli can be seen.⁵⁸

Ribner realizes that to accept the similarity between Bolingbroke's actions and Machiavelli's teachings as intentional is to presume that Shakespeare had access to *The Prince* in some form or other. Whatever the true fact of the matter is, the similarity does exist. But Ribner's case does not allow for the obvious burden of guilt that is borne by Henry IV, particularly in *2 Henry IV*, which Machiavelli would have regarded as an intolerable weakness in his prince. Henry confesses to his son:

... God knows, my son,
By what bypaths and indirect crooked ways
I met this crown, and I myself know well
How troublesome it sat upon my head.
To thee it shall descend with better quiet....

(*2 H1V*, 1V.v. 183-87)

58. Irving Ribner, "Bolingbroke, a True Machiavellian", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 1X (1948), 177-84.

Ribner interprets these lines as merely the means Henry adopts to assure Hal of his legal inheritance. Certainly they are meant to do just this, but there are other instances where the king acknowledges his past sins, such as the occasion in *1 Henry IV* where he expresses the belief that Hal's frivolous life is a punishment for his "mistreadings" (111.ii.11). Generally speaking, the king's demeanour and his sombre speech tend to suggest a man who wears the crown with unease. Moreover, as my earlier comments would *imply*, there is a sense of Shakespeare's disenchanted vision pervading the entire political spectrum, and this would seem to impart Machiavel-
lian overtones insofar as necessity or "policy" seems to be the guiding rule.

But if we allow Henry to speak for himself, he explains to Warwick what it was that directed his action in deposing Richard:

... God knows, I had no such intent,
But that necessity so bowed the state
That I and greatness were compelled to kiss....

(2 *HIV*, 111.i. 72-74)

Henry's words recall John of Gaunt's advice to his son on the eve of his banishment:

All places that the eye of heaven visits
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.
Teach thy necessity to reason thus -
There is no virtue like necessity.

(*R11*, 1.iii. 275-78)

It would seem that Henry is capable of taking this advice very much to heart. If bowing to necessity, which is the very least one can say of Henry's action, entails unpleasant consequences, "the penalty for his sins remains private, inflicted upon the soul of Bolingbroke not upon the nation".⁵⁹ That Shakespeare allows this to be so, and

59. B.J. Baines, "Kingship of the Silent King: A Study of Shakespeare's Bolingbroke", *English Studies*, 61 (1980), 33.

that he enshrines the reign of Henry V, suggests that he is not condemning Bolingbroke's action, but neither does he dismiss the consequences of it. Necessity is hard to distinguish from opportunism, but we cannot say with certainty that necessity alone did set the course for Bolingbroke, and that this same necessity did not involve him in actions that resulted in a burden of guilt. The circumstances surrounding Richard's death loom large here. In fact, necessity and opportunism can be so closely linked that only the conscience of the person concerned can disentangle the real motivation, and even then self-deception may be used in the process. This is the sort of situation that Shakespeare dramatises so effectively. His reticence is not without purpose.

Although the theme of necessity occurs frequently in regard to all rebellious action, and Warwick philosophises on it at some length (2 *HIV*, 111.i.80-92), it by no means provides a sufficient explanation for the damning nature of some of Henry's utterances. When Henry reproves his son for keeping unfit company, his recriminations contain pride rather than guilt, as he recalls the sort of behaviour which helped him to achieve popularity and the crown:

And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,
And dressed myself in such humility
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths
Even in the presence of the crowned King.

(1 *HIV*, 111.i. 50-54)

This is only one of the speeches that Shakespeare uses where irony is the means of furthering the characterization of Henry.⁶⁰ We have already seen that later Henry assures Warwick that only necessity

60. Robert J. Fehrenbach, "The Characterization of the King in 1 *Henry IV*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30 (1979), 42-50.

compelled him to challenge Richard (2 *HIV*, 111.i.72-75). Fehrenbach's description seems comprehensive:

For reasons as selfless and politically necessary as they are self-serving and ambitious, Henry is a private man and a Machiavellian king, alone with his own thoughts of political responsibility and personal guilt.⁶¹

It is as the private man that Henry must bear the burden of guilt for those sins, hinted at but not fully specified; and as the Machiavellian king that he must always be aware of the public image which he projects. But as the training and life of Henry V demonstrate, Shakespeare's ideal king must possess a private and public life which co-exist in perfect harmony. For this reason Henry IV can never be more than a competent, self-conscious king, alert to his public image, but silent about his private self. In him Shakespeare projects the image of a divided personality, which Cruttwell describes as "the new sprit of the age" - a personality plagued by insecurity.⁶² Cruttwell thinks that this doubt does not exist in either *1 and 2 Henry IV* or *Henry V*, but I would disagree, making the provision that the division of self differs a little from that perceived by Cruttwell. Certainly Henry V's varies yet again from the doubt that afflicts his father, because Bolingbroke's is due to guilt, Henry V's to a moral awareness and special insight into the nature of things with which he is invested by Shakespeare. Because of the way in which Shakespeare illuminates the motives for rebellion and for Henry's deposition of Richard in these three plays, Sanders' comment is most valid:

The inextricable mingling of just grievance with illicit ambition in the rebelling party is one of

61. Fehrenbach, p. 43.

62. Patrick Cruttwell, *The Shakespearan Moment* (New York: Random, 1960), pp. 24, 27.

Shakespeare's contributions to an understanding of the real nature of sedition.⁶³

No balanced judgment can be made of Shakespeare's attitude to Bolingbroke's dethronement of Richard 11 without examining the way in which the dramatist portrays Richard's reign. There seems to be a tendency to judge Richard in two ways - to condemn him for gross misgovernment in the first two acts of *Richard 11*, but to sympathise with him after Bolingbroke's return from exile.⁶⁴ Richard's earlier actions are clearly reprehensible. His handling of the dissension between Mowbray and Bolingbroke is an exercise in expedience which has his own security as its foundation, but when rebellion occurs in Ireland he decides:

We will ourself in person to the war;
And for our coffers...
We are inforc'd to farm our royal realm,
The revenue whereof shall furnish us
For our affairs in hand. If that come short,
Our substitutes at home shall have blank charters....

(1.iv. 42-48)

In *Woodstock* this "milking of the realm" is presented as Tresilian's idea with Richard a willing accomplice, but Shakespeare has chosen to place full responsibility for the act squarely on Richard's shoulders. Since Rossiter thinks that *Richard 11* is flawed "by its peculiar dependence on *Woodstock*",⁶⁵ it would seem fair to suggest that Shakespeare here shows that he is acting independently when he emphasizes the point that Richard rules his flatterers, not the reverse. He is also following his historical sources more closely than *Woodstock*'s author is.⁶⁶

63. Sanders, p. 154.

64. See, for example, Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), pp. 30-31.

65. Rossiter, p. 29.

66. See footnote 17 in this chapter.

Soon after he has made the foregoing declaration, Richard is informed of Gaunt's illness, and there is no mistaking his callousness here:

Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
To help him to his grave immediately!
The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars.
Come, gentlemen...
Pray God we may make haste and come too late!

(1.iv. 59-64)

Thorough abuse of all the tradition that has gone to establish his own status is conveyed in his attempt to expunge the Lancaster name. York, who is presented as concerned to choose the correct moral course, censures the king:

Take Herford's rights away, and take from time
His charters, and his customary rights;
Let not tomorrow then ensue to-day:
Be not thyself. For how art thou a king
But by fair sequence and succession?

(11.i. 195-99)

He warns Richard of the consequences, but is answered arrogantly:

Think what you will, we seize into our hands
His plate, his goods, his money and his lands.

(11.i. 209-10)

Aware that these acts demonstrate Richard's shortcomings, Muir, for example, nevertheless thinks that as Bolingbroke's course improves and Richard's declines, our sympathies turn to the King:

This is partly because the King is given all the best poetry to speak; and his great lyrical arias on the fall of princes, the ritual of his abdication and his separation from his wife are all designed to arouse our sympathy. One cannot, it has been said, take sides against poetry. But it is also plain that Richard learns through suffering.⁶⁷

Muir goes on to say that during these scenes Richard has all the

"limelight", and that "he plays to perfection the role of abdicator". I would suggest that the word "plays" is a key one, for Richard covets the centre of the stage at all times, and words or "great lyrical arias" are his means to hold it, as they are any actor's. Richard's performance is not meant merely to arouse our sympathy. It is designed by Shakespeare to provide a closer investigation of Richard's own personal dilemma, and any sympathy aroused by his exposition is a side-effect rather than the main purpose.

As Ornstein has noted, Shakespeare is fascinated by the "psychological mystery at the heart of his [Richard's] behavior, for though infatuated with his royalty, Richard surrendered it to Bolingbroke without a struggle".⁶⁸ Richard's nature is contradictory. He is capable of intelligence and bravery, yet he is also sensual, irresponsible and self-destructive. His capacity for self-destruction is seen by Gaunt (11.i.104-08) and York (11.i.198-99), and the theme itself is worthy of notice since it also occurs in *Richard III*. Reese comments that this conception of Richard's downfall is substantiated by historical fact, so we can readily understand Shakespeare's desire to analyse his character, and appreciate more fully what he is presenting in the later scenes between Richard and Bolingbroke.⁶⁹ In these later scenes, Richard is seen as largely responsible for his own dethronement. Bolingbroke merely has to wait, for in the King's own words he is "out-fac'd by Bolingbroke" rather than dethroned:

Now, mark me how I will undo myself.
I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand....

(1V.i. 203ff.)

It is as if Bolingbroke is watching like a charmed snake, while Richard

68. Ornstein, p. 107.

69. Reese, p. 234.

"wantons with his woes".⁷⁰

Through such scenes we gain a deeper psychological insight into Richard's character, tragically flawed as it is by its sheer lack of substance. Deprived of royal trappings, Richard has nothing, and it is in his realization of this that sympathy is gained, but it is not sympathy which can alter our judgment of him as being an unfit king. Therefore, Shakespeare's purpose in the first part of the play is to demonstrate Richard's serious shortcomings as ruler, and then, later, to examine the man behind the regal splendour. This second procedure is, in a sense, a self-examination, wherein Richard divests himself of his regal sanctity, feels what this is like, and is dismayed at what remains. Traversi thinks that Shakespeare treats the situation in this manner, so that the idea of monarchy itself as a sacred trust is left unscathed; it is Richard who falls short of the ideal, not the principle itself.⁷¹ Traversi's interpretation can account for the biblical imagery, which causes Brooke, for one, to argue that Shakespeare's attitude to Richard's deposition is elucidated by the response evoked from such lines as:

Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,
Showing an outward pity - yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin.

(1V.i. 239-42)⁷²

However, I would suggest that such a judgment is incomplete when it does not include Richard's following lines:

Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest.
For I have given here my soul's consent

70. Ornstein, p. 117.

71. Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare from 'Richard III' to 'Henry V'* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1957), p. 20.

72. See Brooke, p. 131.

T'undock the pompous body of a king....

(1V.i. 247-50)

The early lines then, indicate the actor's ability to inflate his tragedy, and taken in full, the speech offers Richard himself as the chief betrayer.

In *Richard 11*, Shakespeare's main purpose seems to be to demonstrate how a ruler can so far demean his royal office that the acts of a usurper like Bolingbroke, even if spurred by "illicit ambition", pale before the greater failing of the king. Richard is the rightful heir, but this alone has no inbuilt guarantee of producing laudable leadership qualities. Hence in *1 and 2 Henry 1V*, Shakespeare shows how a king with no lawful right to inherit the crown can nevertheless rule successfully, if he is strong and looks to the nation's welfare. In the later part of *2 Henry 1V* and *Henry V*, he provides the divine sanction of legal inheritance, but takes care that this new king should be trained to recognize his responsibilities as well as his rights as king.

In a world of sheer political realism, such as the *Henry 1V* plays depict, good can often make little or no impression. We have already seen its total inefficiency in the person of Henry VI, where, at times, by its very inadequacy, it becomes ludicrous. In most *Morality* plays virtue makes little dramatic impact. In the *Henry 1V* plays, however, Shakespeare remedies this by presenting a figure that is to be idealised in a more dramatically intriguing manner. The Prince frequents taverns and keeps lowly company yet, unlike his *Morality* counterpart, he is never really in danger of falling prey to evil counsellors. Of this the audience is assured in Hal's soliloquy (*1 H1V*, 1.ii.199-221). His behaviour rouses anxiety and

despair in his father and expectation in Falstaff. Only the audience shares the secret with the Prince, and Warwick shrewdly estimates:

The Prince but studies his companions
Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language....

(2 *H1V*, 1*V*.iv. 68-69)

All this adds substance to the character of the Prince and suspense to the plot's outcome. The association of good with bad also deprives the virtuous character of the naivety of a Woodstock. Hence good is more effective in its confrontation with evil. We have seen that in *Woodstock* good and evil are kept apart so that the playwright can handle his material successfully. We have also to acknowledge the inadequacy of too much virtue in Woodstock himself and in Henry VI. In *1 and 2 Henry 1V*, Shakespeare sees that good requires some "baptism of fire", some acquaintance with the workings of the force that would oppose it, in order to prevail, and, more importantly, in order to control the evil or shrewd political dealings which will always exist within a nation's power politics. This is why Hal carouses with Falstaff and Poins, but never surrenders to the tempters, and why he is able to recognize the admirable and the superfluous qualities in Hotspur. He is tempered by his experiences, but never contaminated,⁷³ and ultimately emerges as Shakespeare's ideal soldier-king adept in civil and military matters.

All this makes one wonder what Shakespeare really thought of the sacred nature of kingship, since the *making* of a good king rather than his hereditary rights, as a man born to be king, is emphasized. Certainly Shakespeare is querying the unquestioning acceptance of a King whom the accident of birth has called to be the Lord's anointed.

73. Bullough also comments on this. See *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, IV, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 267.

Richard II is this, and apparently has been educated to appreciate his rights only, as his words demonstrate (111.ii.54-62), and he thinks that God will protect these rights irrespective of his own efforts:

God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel: then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.

(111.ii. 60-62)

In *Henry V* (1599)⁷⁴ Shakespeare presents his ideal king. Tried, tested and ultimately proved worthy throughout the proceedings of the Henry IV plays, this worthiness is firmly established in the opening scene of the play. The Archbishop of Canterbury marvels at the completeness of the king's reformation since the death of his father, and through the cleric's words Shakespeare demonstrates that his ideal king excels in matters spiritual, civil, political and martial (1.i.38-45). This immediately confirms him as a king who possesses those qualities which were lacking in the rulers of the earlier plays of the two history tetralogies, and who, unlike his father, is able to combine successfully the ideal private and public image of the king.

Shakespeare's method of portraying Henry V has been criticized by some critics for a number of reasons, and I do not wish to enter into controversy concerning the play's style or the inconsistency of the king's portrayal, except insofar as it is relevant to this discussion.⁷⁵ Tillyard complains that the witty Hal has become a king "whose thinking is done for him by his counsellors".⁷⁶ Surely

74. William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. J.H. Walter (London: Methuen, 1954). All references to the text are from this edition.

75. See, for example, Tillyard, pp. 304-14.

76. Tillyard, p. 310.

Shakespeare is demonstrating that Henry V, unlike his predecessors (in the sequence of the historical dramas), is able to heed good advice rather than merely follow his own whims. For this matter, Shakespeare also shows him as well aware of both moral and tactical implications in the way that he asks his questions. He is far from merely being Tillyard's "pure man of action". Shakespeare again offers his king as exemplary when he shows that he is able to deal effectively with the evil of rebellion. The dramatist uses the scene between Henry and the traitors for a two-fold purpose, for the evils of flattery are also revealed for empty subterfuge. Aware of their treacherous conniving with the French, Henry tells them that

we are well persuaded
We carry not a heart with us from hence
That grows not in a fair consent with ours....

(11.ii. 20-22)

Cambridge answers hypocritically: "Never was monarch better fear'd and lov'd/Than is your majesty." This scene is well set up by Shakespeare, partly because it effectively establishes that the king is still the lively Hal in whom "intellect and activity was finely balanced".⁷⁷ That its excellence might not be sustained throughout the play is the cost exacted by a work that is primarily didactic in its purpose.

Shakespeare goes on with the scene in a manner that allows Henry V to illustrate the differences that exist between his handling of treason and that of his brothers at Gaultree in *2 Henry IV*. He shows that he is capable of mercy by stating that he intends to pardon the offence of a man which was committed under the influence of "excess of wine" (11.ii.42). Scroop protests at this imprudent

77. Tillyard, p. 310.

display of mercy "lest example/Breed...more of such a kind" (45-46), thus ironically setting the bounds for his own punishment and that of his fellow conspirators, Cambridge and Grey. When the king denounces their treason, he ensures that this connection is made:

The mercy that was quick in us but late
By your own counsel is suppress'd and kill'd:
You must not dare, for shame, to talk of mercy;
For your own reasons turn into your bosoms,
As dogs upon their masters, worrying you.

(11.ii. 79-83)

The last two lines are reminiscent of Buckingham's acknowledgement of his own retribution (*R111*, V.i.23-24), and the docile manner in which the traitors accept their sentence demonstrates that they too recognize the justice and inevitability of their punishment, and it emphasizes as well that their treasonable act is unmerited against such a king as Henry V. The king's reaction shows the hurt of an ordinary man towards one who has shared his greatest confidences, but his long speech is careful to embrace the national welfare as well as that of the royal person. Although the king's treatment of the traitors in *Henry V* is made to contrast favourably with his brothers' action at Gaultree, there is, nevertheless, an unpleasant family likeness suggested when he orders every French prisoner's throat to be cut (1V.vii.65) and that infamous act of *2 Henry IV*.

The moral concern with mercy and justice, which Shakespeare is careful to establish in Henry V in the scene with the traitors, is noticeable when he questions the Archbishop about the legality of waging war against the French. This moral sensitivity causes Henry to comprehend the essentially evil nature of war, but it is not shown as a weakness which could blind him to any attempt the cleric might make to colour his justification of war in order to suit the English cause:

For God doth know how many now in health
 Shall drop their blood in approbation
 Of what your reverence shall incite us to.
 Therefore take heed...
 How you awake our sleeping sword of war....

(1.ii. 18-22)

And Henry is not content to leave matters here. He wanders through the camp on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, concealing his identity beneath a borrowed cloak, and engages some soldiers in talk concerning the nature of war. The conversation that ensues must surely convey some of Shakespeare's own sentiments. Bates refers to the loss of life incurred by a war fought for a king's cause, and adds that if the king's cause is wrong "our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us" (1V.i.123-34). Williams adds that if this is the case then "the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make" (135-36). The king's reply ultimately proposes that "every subject's/duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his/own" (182-84). His inconclusive argument, seems to console the soldiers, and it may have satisfied many in his audience, but it is debatable whether or not it would have convinced men with the convictions of a Donne, a Drayton or a Ben Jonson. Shakespeare has made his point that war admits an evil, and the continued conscience-searching of Henry V shows that he, too, is aware of its evil and must seek to justify England's instigation of it. His reflections on the nature of evil as possessing a partial good, and that loving one's hardships can lead to a "legerity" of spirit (1V.i.4-23), emphasize Henry's tendency to analyse things rather ~~as~~ Hamlet does. They do not reveal any great insights, although they are perhaps the best that man can achieve when he meditates on evil.

The evil of usurpation which has provided a controversial issue throughout the history plays emerges again in *Henry V*, and so can

perhaps be regarded as conveying Shakespeare's thoughts as far as they concern the vexed question of Richard 11's deposition. Yet in its own way it is somewhat inconclusive, possibly because the exact nature of the crime of usurpation is never fully understood. To what degree are we to consider Henry 1V as culpable in the murder of Richard 11, for surely the murder of the king as well as the act of deposition is at question here. Henry V seems well aware of this, when before the Battle of Agincourt he prays:

Not to-day, O Lord!
O not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forced drops of blood.

(1V.i. 298-303)

Yet Henry's moral perception is such that he can see the futility of his attempt to make amends, and perhaps sense a future retribution, for

More will I do;
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon.

(308-11)

The final chorus reinforces such an impression and supports the idea that Shakespeare shared in Raleigh's understanding of the iterative pattern of history.

The author of *Woodstock* may seem adventurous in his sanctioning of rebellion as a solution to the economic chaos caused by a weak ruler and flagrant misgovernment, but he does this by looking backward dramatically to the Morality tradition to find his resolution. Marlowe is more representative of the Renaissance spirit, because he recognizes that all men are capable of evil. He does not draw a

distinct line between his good and evil characters as *Woodstock's* author does. Shakespeare's Histories have their share of ambitious men, but Marlowe's focus on Mortimer's grasp for power seems more fascinated with the soaring spirit in ambition than Shakespeare's does. Moreover, Marlowe's portrayal seems curiously static, perhaps because Mortimer's exploit occurs late in *Edward 11*, and because we are made conscious of the controlling power of Fortune's Wheel. This conveys a lack of freedom in regard to men's actions, which is detectable throughout the play, as earlier it is man's passions that control him. In spite of Marlowe's Renaissance spirit, it is the older concept of Fortune's sway that dominates Mortimer's fall from power.

More modern in approach and deep in psychological insights are Shakespeare's two History tetralogies. Power politics of the sort the twentieth century can appreciate spring vividly to life. Any comparison between the playwrights is unfair, in the sense that Shakespeare wrote his eight history plays over most of the last decade of the sixteenth century, and, therefore, he had time for his understanding to mature, and much space in which to explore his themes and offer various theories. Even so, it is unlikely that Marlowe had the temperament to undertake such a lengthy and profound study of related themes as we find in Shakespeare's history plays. As Sanders comments:

... whereas Marlowe met the Machiavellian world head-on and dealt with it at the level of maxim and plot-manipulation, Shakespeare goes straight to the inner world of consciousness and deals with conscience in terms of persons, not ideas.⁷⁸

Undoubtedly there is a medieval flavour to the opening of *Richard 11* that does not occur in *Edward 11* for example.⁷⁹ However,

78. Sanders, p. 82.

79. Ornstein, p. 103; Tillyard, p.259.

Richard 11 is far more modern in its resolutions than Marlowe's play, where there seems to be a Calvinist type of determinism in its characterization, and a medieval preoccupation with the idea of Fortune's Wheel as a controlling factor in men's lives. One insight that I would offer as modern in Shakespeare's plays has been pinpointed by Sanders: "Right may be problematical, but violent wrong carries its own judgment within itself".⁸⁰ This theme may be seen to operate throughout Shakespeare's histories, and particularly is it suggested by the playwright as the undoing of Richard 11 and the burden of Henry IV. It is powerfully present in *Richard 111*, but with a different dramatic emphasis, because of Shakespeare's preoccupation with the special theatrical mould of Richard himself.

While Marlowe is absorbed in projecting unruly passions and the cruelty of which men are capable, Shakespeare also looks outside man's nature at the manner in which the times fashion his behaviour and ethical codes. This is particularly evident in *1 and 2 Henry IV*, and is possibly the main cause for the relevance to our own age of much of the plays' material. It is unwise to see Shakespeare as orthodox at all times in his political outlook, for this limits our appreciation of his abilities. Shakespeare makes us look closely at the real world, not at a medieval world order, although some elements of this still exist, and not at a rigid Tudor framework. Some of Shakespeare's reticence regarding Bolingbroke's usurpation was intended probably to make inflexible Elizabethans examine more closely their own doctrinaire stance.

In the second history tetralogy Shakespeare's ability to see behaviour and situations in varying lights suggests a freedom of

80. Sanders, p. 190.

choice, which in turn conveys a spirit of optimism; and this occurs in spite of his realistic appraisal of the world. *Woodstock* exudes good humour and optimism, but at the cost of realism. Marlowe's characters seem to be hampered severely by determinism of either an outer or inner nature, and so they lack the freedom found in Shakespeare's plays. Paradoxically, it might seem, the conscience-seeking of Shakespeare's plays creates a greater sense of freedom because it suggests the possibility of choice.

CONCLUSION

If one looks back at the *Psychomachia* plays the dramatist seems loath to admit the vices as part of man. They are acted out on the stage, but there seems to be a need to preserve and isolate - to hold up for scrutiny - the nature of man in the light of its resemblance to its creator. The *imago dei* concept of man is emphasized particularly by the medieval image of man as a besieged castle. Something of this image still lingers in the early Moralities, and while it holds, man can more easily be understood as essentially redeemable.

As evil is perceived increasingly to be an inclination of man, and, in fact, as man is seen frequently to have a positive predilection for evil, the many personified vices of the earlier plays are absorbed into the human protagonist. Characters like Apius in *Apius and Virginia* and Clois Hoffman in *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, can be seen as representing the specific evils of tyrannical lust and vengeful blood-lust, but in villains like Kyd's Lorenzo and Shakespeare's Richard III, all sorts of vicious evils are realized within the one man.

The evil in sixteenth century English drama is man-made. This is why the growth of the dramatist's understanding of man's nature is so intrinsic to his attitude to evil. In plays where man's potential for evil is fully recognized and presented, the evil and destruction that he dispenses far outweighs that which the vice of the Moralities is shown as being able to inflict. In a play like Chettle's *Hoffman* there is very little virtue. Evil predominates, and when it is finally thwarted, it is not because the powers of good have been

strong enough to defeat it, but because a lesser evil has opposed it, and largely from motives of self-preservation. And so even the idea of submerged good ultimately asserting itself as a sort of natural reaction, which is detectable in a play like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, is absent.

Both Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Mortimer profess that it is they who turn Fortune's wheel, but as a mere mortal Tamburlaine becomes death's victim and Mortimer Fortune's. Richard III who chooses evil with great energy and calculation must also give way to the inevitable movement of history. In this sense the characters who embody so much complex and dynamic evil are themselves ultimately just as much a victim as the naive and less ambitious heroes of the late medieval and early Morality plays. And as evil may be shown as alien to man's nature in the *Psychomachia*, it is shown as capable of despoiling man's nature in a play like *Selimus*, capable of alienating Lorenzo and Richard III from the word of ordinary men, and ultimately self-destructive in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and in the tyrant and revenge plays. Hence, while evil may be seen to have the same ultimate effects throughout the drama, it is the dramatist's increasing ability to penetrate and project man's nature realistically, the material and the environment and ideas of the plays through which he chooses to illustrate man and his actions, and the development in the art of theatrical presentation, that intensifies and broadens the dramatist's attitude to evil.

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